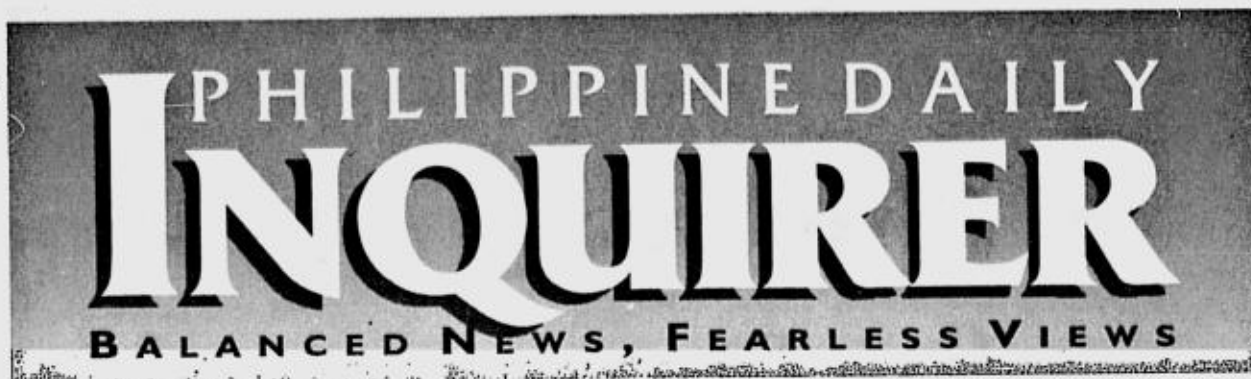


Pope calls for new int'l order based on UN goals

VATICAN CITY—Pope John Paul II rang in the New Year on Thursday with a renewed call for peace in the Middle East and Africa and the creation of a new world order based on respect for the dignity of man and equality among nations. John Paul presided over a morning Mass inside St. Peter's Basilica to mark This year, John Paul directed his

POPE/A7

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph



Friday, January 2, 2004 ★★ 38 pages / 3 sections / vol. 19 / no. 25

P15

website: www.inq7.net

Opposition boasts 'powerhouse' slate

By Michael Lim Ubac and Christine O. Avendaño

AFTER Senate Majority Leader Loren Legarda accepted actor Fernando Poe Jr.'s invitation to serve as his running mate, the opposition's focus has shifted to the Senate. Legarda herself described the opposition's

OPPOSITION/A6

Loren splits opposition

New Year's Eve revelry 'generally peaceful'

By Blanche S. Rivera and Christian V. Esguerra

FIREFIGHTERS found three more bodies in the smoky rubble of the public market of Lucena City yesterday, bringing to 18 the death toll from a firecracker-ignited fire that ushered in the New Year in the country's time-worn tradition of celebrating with noise and light to drive away evil and bad luck.

The tragedy was part of a riotous New Year's Eve that began at dusk on Wednesday and ended at dawn yesterday, leaving 420 people injured from firecracker-lighting accidents and 13 from celebratory gunfire in Metro Manila alone, according to police officials.

Twenty fires raced through Metro Manila on New Year's Eve, one more than the 19 recorded in 2002. (See related story, Page A18.)

"We're still getting reports from the field but I think the celebration was generally peaceful. Although the mood was very festive, there were less casualties than we expected," said Police Supt. Joel Goltiao.

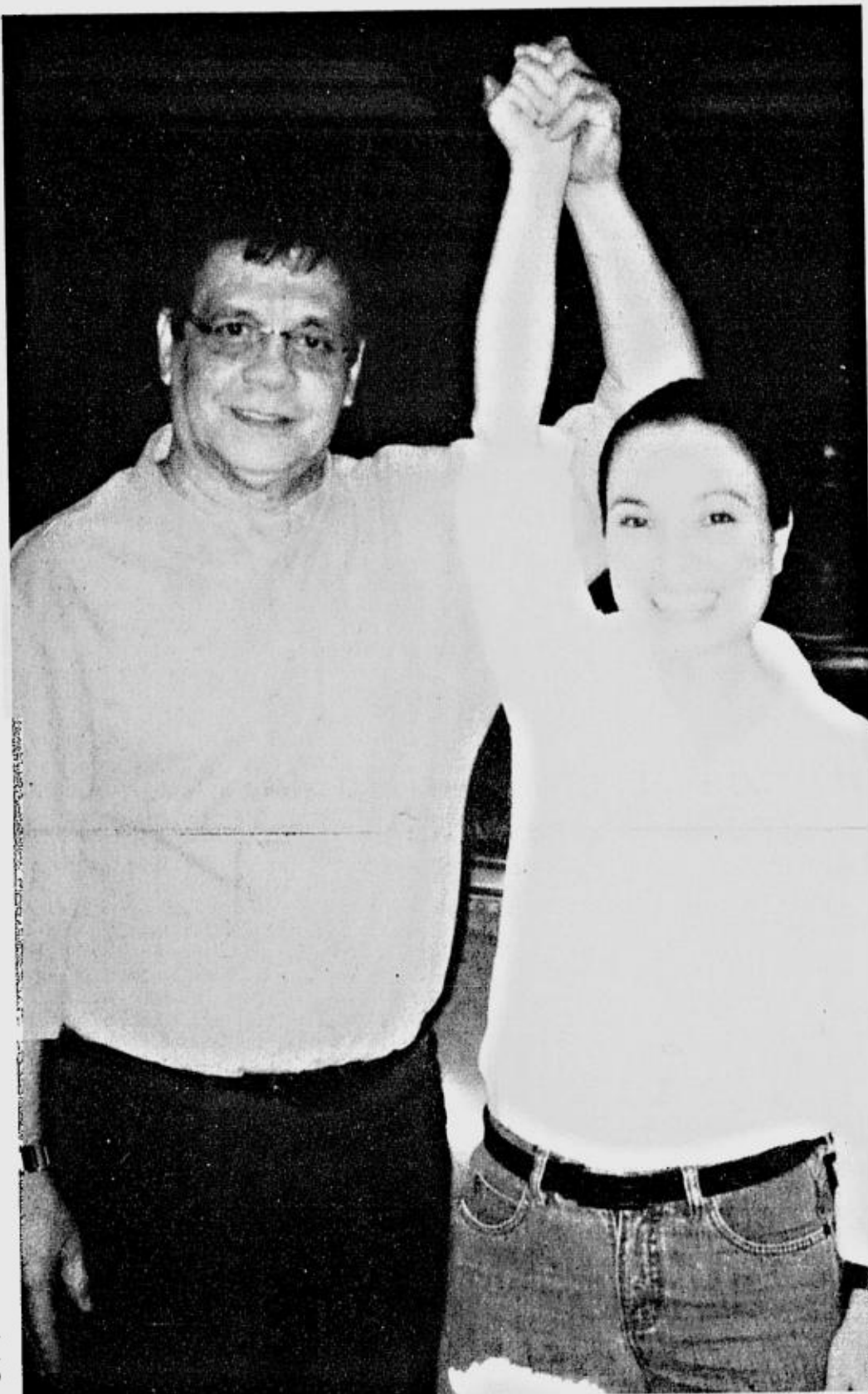
Director Avelino Razon, the police director for operations, said the two-week holiday season was "generally peaceful and orderly."

"There was no attack from terrorists or from the [communist] New People's Army. Dec. 30 was not marked by any terrorist activity," he said.

On Dec. 30, 2000, suspected terrorists exploded five bombs in a Light Railway Transit train and several other places in Metro Manila, killing 22 people.

Nationwide, the number of

NEW YEAR'S/A6



POWER couple Fernando Poe Jr. and Sen. Loren Legarda make it official after their three-hour meeting in San Juan on Tuesday.

Some hope for FPJ, Ping to get together

By Jerry Esplanada and Michael Lim Ubac

BUT WHY her?

An opposition leader yesterday said movie actor Fernando Poe Jr.'s choice of Senate Majority Leader Loren Legarda for his running mate has unsettled many in the opposition.

"Maraming nanlalata (Many were disheartened)" after Senate Minority Leader Vicente Sotto III's announcement, ex-Sen. Francisco Tatad told the INQUIRER. He did not name names, but said "they included guys close to FPJ. There were various reactions. We're trying to get hold of Tito Sotto for our inputs."

Sotto had said that Legarda was the unanimous choice of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino, but Tatad yesterday maintained that for some opposition members, the decision was "not final."

"Things could still change. The

two forces (referring to the political camps of Poe and Sen. Panfilo Lacson, who is also running for president) could still work together. At this point, forming the tandem is not intrinsically impossible," Tatad said.

"We're still hoping for a united opposition and we have one whole month to work on that," he told the INQUIRER. "We have not given up ... We can still afford to be hopeful."

Tatad, chair of the advisory council of the opposition Puwersang Masang Pilipino (of deposed President Joseph Estrada), had

LOREN/A4

Lim, Rasul, Herrera in 2 slates

By Juliet L. Javellana

DON'T LOOK now, but the administration coalition's short list of Senate candidates includes names that also appear in the opposition's slate.

Ex-senator Ernesto Herrera, ex-Interior Secretary Alfredo Lim, and ex-presidential adviser Amina Rasul-Bernardo are prospective candidates on both President Macapagal-Arroyo's slate and actor Fernando Poe Jr.'s ticket.

Herrera, a labor leader who rose to national prominence as a member of the Agrava Commission that investigated the Aquino assassination, also served a term in the House of Representatives. He was closely identified with the late Foreign Secretary Blas Ople, his colleague in the Senate.

Lim, a police general who became director of the National Bureau of Investigation, also served as mayor of Manila. He ran for president in 1998, and later served as President Joseph Estrada's secretary of Interior and Local Government.

Bernardo is the daughter of former Sen. Santanina Rasul, the last Muslim leader to serve in the Senate. She was a fellow at the US Institute of Peace, a US-funded organization tasked with developing strategies for peace in

LIM/A4



'Palace will become MTRCB'

WITH a Poe-Loren ticket, there will be no need for a Movies and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) to screen movies and television programs, Lakas Rep. Prospero Nograles yesterday said.

The "super typhoon" tandem of movie star Fernando Poe Jr. and broadcaster-turned-senator Loren Legarda is this early being buffeted by brickbats.

Allies of President Macapagal-Arroyo and Sen. Panfilo Lacson refuse to take seriously the "blockbuster

PALACE/A4

All hands on deck for pols running for office

By Volt Contreras

WATCH those hand signs during the electoral campaign. They could well span the difference between defeat and victory.

This is a New Year suggestion to politicians who are running for office.

While they are expected to display the "craftiness of monkeys"

in the election year of 2004, the Chinese Year of the Monkey, candidates should also consider whether they attract positive or negative vibes whenever they flash their party pep gestures, according to a paranormal consultant.

The V or "Victory" sign, for example, is always a good symbol because the index and middle fin-

gers form the shape of a receptacle "catching blessings from heaven or accepting the will of the Divine," said Zenaida Simbulas, a psychic consulted by politicians, businessmen and show biz celebrities.

The so-called "I love you" sign [wherein the thumb, index finger and pinky stick out] is, on the contrary, a magnet for "negative

energies since it forms horns," said Simbulas, who said she drew these "esoteric" meanings from ancient Indian teachings.

The "No. 1" sign [index finger pointing up] can be considered positive if the thumb and other fingers are "closed" tightly together and not pointing to the front. This way, she said, the whole hand

ALL HANDS/A7

WINNING HAND



EDDIE VILLANUEVA: Victory sign, FPJ: A wish or threat? Going for a receptacle to catch blessings.



FPJ: A wish or threat? Going for a receptacle to catch blessings.



PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL: Feeling A-OK, according to her hand sign.



RAUL ROCO: Index finger pointing upward, a key to open doors to power.



PING LACSON: Clenched fist signifies danger, a readiness to fight.



PDI PHOTO

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Visayas and Mindanao will have cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to cloudy with isolated rainshowers.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: ARMIN ADINA, PDI RESEARCH/01/02/04

E-mail: pr_news@inquirer.com.ph

Second FRONT PAGE

Metro Manila Partly cloudy
Baguio Partly cloudy
Tuguegarao Partly cloudy
Laos Partly cloudy
Clark Zone Partly cloudy
Tagaytay Partly cloudy
Laguna Partly cloudy
Cebu Partly cloudy

Iloilo/Bacolod Cloudy with rains
Roxas Cloudy with rains
Cebu Cloudy with rains
Tacloban Cloudy with rains
Gen. Santos Cloudy with rains
Zamboanga Cloudy with rains
Cagayan de Oro Cloudy with rains
Davao Cloudy with rains

Chinoys dump Ping for Poe, says solon

By Carlito Pablo and Christian V. Esguerra

MOVIE actor Fernando Poe Jr., and not Sen. Panfilo Lacson, is now the top choice for president of the affluent Chinese-Filipino community, which traditionally has been the biggest contributor to the political campaign coffers of national candidates.

Or so claimed Rep. Harry Angping (NPC), who hails from Binondo or Chinatown.

"Before it was Ping (Lacson) but now it's FPJ (Poe)," Angping said. "FPJ's popularity and the perception that he's a sure winner has caught up in the Chinese-Filipino community."

Angping's claim, however, was strongly disputed by Citizen's Action Against Crime chair Teresita Ang-See.

"He doesn't speak for the Chinese-Filipino community and neither do I," Ang-See told the INQUIRER in a telephone interview yesterday.

In the first place, she said, the community has never come up with a solid vote for a lone candidate in past elections.

Based on informal surveys conducted among Chinese-Filipinos, Ang-See said there were "solid blocs" supporting President Macapagal-Arroyo, former Education Secretary Raul Roco and Senator Lacson.

"It's too early to say that FPJ has already a group solidly behind him because he's a latecomer," she said.

Lacson had endeared himself to sections of the Chinese-Filipino community for his accomplishments against kidnap-for-ransom gangs during his days as a police officer.

Angping, however, conceded that as in past elections, the Chinese-Filipino community will be divided among the competing candidates.

"Of course, some quarters will support GMA because she is the incumbent," said Angping, referring to President Macapagal.

He pointed out that by getting the nod of the Chinese-Filipino community, Poe would have "everything going for him."

Campaign contributions

"The campaign contributions will be there. FPJ is also popular among the grassroots," Angping said.

Poe's candidacy is being backed by the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino led by Sen. Edgardo Angara of the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino.

The KNP also counts the Partido ng Masang Pilipino of de-

posed President Joseph Estrada and the PDP-Laban of Sen. Aquilino Pimentel as members.

Angping stressed that bulk of his party, the Nationalist People's Coalition of businessman Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco Jr., was also supporting Poe.

"FPJ has it all—funds, popularity and machinery," said Angping. "He's going to have an easy ride to Malacañang."

According to Ang-See, the votes of the Chinese-Filipino community were "basically insignificant because we're less than one percent of the population."

"The value comes in the fact that some businessmen can influence their workers on whom to vote for. But that's it."

"If indeed the Chinese-Filipino community could swing votes, she said this would be exclusively in the Binondo congressional district in Manila which Angping represents.

Ang-See also described as a "myth" the impression that Chinese-Filipinos had big financial clout during elections.

"Sigurista sila (they don't take chances)," she said. "Their (financial) support is always spread out but there's always a candidate who will get the lion's share."

Supreme Court to 'clock' employees

By Philip C. Tubeza

HOW'S THIS for a New Year's resolution.

To curb tardiness and absenteeism in the judiciary, the Supreme Court has ordered court employees all over the country to punch a Bundy clock beginning next month.

In a memorandum, SC Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. ordered all employees, below the rank of judges, to use the Bundy clock starting Feb. 1 this year to record their arrival and departure times from work.

"Government officials and employees must give every minute of their prescribed official time in service to the public and must work for every centavo paid to them by the government," Davide said.

He added that using a Bundy clock would remove the perceived unfairness in recording work hours "solely on daily time records and logbooks where entries may be easily manipulated by those who come late or go home early or are absent."

Davide also said that the use of the clock is in line with previous administrative circulars directing court officials to strictly observe official time, imposing disciplinary sanction for absenteeism and tardiness, and reiterating the Civil Service Commission's policy on habitual absenteeism.

Airline ordered to pay opera star

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE SUPREME Court has upheld the lawsuit won by acclaimed soprano Andion Fernandez against Singapore Airlines for failing to fly her to Manila as scheduled in late January 1991.

The blunder and the "rude and unkind" behavior of the airline's personnel caused Fernandez "mental fatigue and skin rashes," and led to her performing "below par" before the King and Queen of Malaysia, the high court said.

"When a passenger contracts for a specific flight, he has a purpose in making that choice which should be respected. This choice, once exercised, must not be impaired by a breach on the part of the airline without the latter incurring any liability," said the 14-page decision penned by Justice Romeo Callejo Sr.

The SC's Second Division also affirmed the P475,000 in damages that a trial court had ordered Singapore Airlines to pay Fernandez.

Fernandez had bought a Singapore Airlines ticket for a flight from Frankfurt, Germany to Singapore. From Singapore, she was to go on to Manila on Jan. 28, 1991.

She was going to Manila to pick up her wardrobe and rehearse for her performance before the King and Queen of Malaysia on Feb. 3 and 4. She was supposed to leave Manila on Jan. 29.

Her plane was delayed two hours in Frankfurt on Jan. 28, however, and she and 25 other passengers were not able to catch the connecting flight to Manila, despite assurances by Singapore Airlines personnel in Frankfurt that they would arrive in Singapore on schedule.

When she went to the Singapore Airlines counter in Chiangi Airport in Singapore the following day, a male employee was rude to her.

She explained her predicament but the employee "uncaringly" retorted: "It's your problem, not ours."

Golez leaves Cabinet to run for Congress

By Alcuin Papa and Juliet Labog-Javellana

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo has lost another member of her Cabinet to the campaign for May's election after National Security Adviser Roilo Golez quit to run for a congressional seat in Parañaque City.

Golez, a graduate of the United States Naval Academy and a three-term congressman before he joined Ms Macapagal's team in 2001, oversaw policies on anti-terrorism efforts against homegrown and regional militants but had no direct control over security forces.

His widely expected departure will bring a fifth new face into the President's inner circle with just over four months until national elections on May 10.

An exhausted Jose Isidro Camacho quit as finance secretary

in November, Foreign Secretary Blas Ople died last month and Manuel Roxas and Simeon Datumanong, the trade and justice secretaries, respectively, left recently to prepare for their election campaigns.

Golez told reporters yesterday he would turn in his resignation on Jan. 5 and register as a candidate on the same day. Candidates for more than 17,000 national, regional and local elected offices have until Monday to file their certificates of candidacy.

Golez said he had already informed President Macapagal of his decision. "I got her full blessings and understanding. It's all systems go."

He said he would run as a candidate of Kampi, Ms Macapagal's own party, for the city's congressional seat in the second district.

He said he was not afraid of

running against Mayor Joey Marquez for the Parañaque seat. "This is my home turf," he said.

Marquez, an actor-turned-politician who had a high-profile on-and-off affair with actress Kris Aquino, would be the official candidate of the ruling Lakas-CMD for the newly created second district of Parañaque.

Golez boasted of helping the Macapagal administration as "the country's number-one security manager." He drew attention to the reduction in the ranks of the terrorist group Abu Sayyaf from more than 1,000 to 400 and the killing or capture of ASG leaders Aldam Tillam, otherwise known as Abu Sabaya, Mujib Susukan, Abdul Mukim Edris, Commander Global and Commander Robot.

Golez added that top militants of the Jemaah Islamiyah, Agus Dwikarna and Fathur Rohman Al-Ghozi, were arrested or killed

during his watch. Dwikarna was arrested at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport in March 2002, while Al-Ghozi was killed in a firefight with government forces in North Cotabato.

"We were rated by US President George W. Bush as having the best counterterrorism program in the region. During the term of the President, there were no terrorist incidents in Metro Manila."

Golez also said that during his term, the forces of the communist-led New People's Army had been reduced to 8,500 from a high of 10,000. He also said the administration had acted decisively on the Magdalo mutiny in Makati City.

"I leave the post of NSA with a heavy heart because of the warm and close relationship I had with the President," Golez said. With Reuters

Darkness still reigns in contested Laguna barangay

By Norman Bordadora

ONLY THE school house and a few homes nearby light up Barangay Casile.

The sound of a ring tone occasionally breaks the choir of crickets in the dark but almost all residents of this community in Canlubang, Laguna, still have to wait the next day to recharge their cellular phones.

"We have to walk perhaps some 500 meters up the road to have our cell phones charged in some friends' homes near the school. Almost all of Casile's homes have yet to receive electricity," said Onie Petate, a 46-year-old housewife in this barangay of some 300 or so families.

Like almost all pupils of Casile Elementary School, Onie's 7-year-old daughter Maria Concepcion studies her lessons and gets her homework done literally by burning the midnight oil.

"The Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) started putting up electric posts in Casile as early as the 1990s during the Ramos administration," Petate said.

"But a temporary restraining order" issued by the Supreme Court was invoked by the Yulo estate in preventing further development of our place," Petate said.

Casile's 257 hectares of land, planted to coconut, pineapple,

coffee and fruit trees, is the subject of a 15-year dispute between the Yulo family, which bought the land from the Madrigals in 1945, and the Casile farmers, who've tilled and lived on the land since 1910.

The Yulo family started eviction proceedings against the farmers in 1985.

While the farmers and the Yulo family await the Supreme Court ruling on the question of Casile's coverage under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program, the development of the community is on hold.

"Casile never had electricity from the start. It's something we could somehow live without," said Sergio Cruzat, Casile's barangay captain since 1997. Cruzat is himself a farmer-claimant.

"The Yulo family was able to use its influence to prevent Meralco from pursuing the electrification of Casile. They said the Supreme Court TRO prevented the establishment of permanent structures in Casile," said lawyer Efrén Mercado.

Mercado, a member of the Free Legal Assistance Group, represents the 80 farmer-beneficiaries.

"Meralco, upon learning of the dispute between the Yulo family and the Casile farmers, probably didn't want anything to do with the legal controversy. They decid-

ed to forego the electrification," Mercado told the INQUIRER.

More than 10 years later, almost all of Casile has yet to enjoy basic utilities such as electricity, running water and telephones.

Compounding the community's woes is Casile's access road that remains unpaved. The farmers' produce could also not be brought out through the Yulo's Canlubang Golf and Country Club en route to the town's public market.

The Department of Agrarian Reform Adjudication Board (Darab) in 1992 awarded certificates of land ownership to some 85 farmers who had been living in Casile since before World War II or their respective heirs under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law.

But the Yulo family appealed the decision with the Court of Appeals which upheld Darab's decision.

The Yulo family insists on its ownership of the land, arguing that it is exempt from CARP because it is a watershed and is sloped at an 18-degree angle.

"Land above 18 percent slope cannot be titled. And yet you are claiming this very property as your own?" SC Chief Justice Hilario Davide asked the estate's lawyers.

In December 1993, the Supreme Court granted the Yulo estate's petition for review



BARANGAY Casile boasts pineapples, coffee, coconut and fruit trees but for the past decade has been denied electricity, running water and telephones because of a 15-year dispute with the Yulo family. JIM GUANO PUNZALAN

and certiorari.

Nine years later in 2002, the SC decided to remand the case back to the Darab.

"We couldn't believe the decision since the Yulos didn't present any new evidence to support their claim to exempt the land from CARP," said farmer Cresen-

cio Amante whose grandfather are among those who fled the Taal Volcano eruption in the 1900s and settled in Casile.

"Many of the farmers and their families here thought that the Supreme Court would finally uphold our CLOAs since the Darab and the CA have said that the

land was covered by CARP," Amante told the INQUIRER.

The farmers filed a motion for reconsideration but the high tribunal upheld its earlier decision. Persistent, the farmers filed a second motion for reconsideration which the SC is still studying whether or not to allow.

Global warming caused landslides, says gov't exec

A CABINET official on Thursday blamed global warming for the series of landslides and floods that wrought death and destruction in the central and southern Philippines last month.

The disasters killed more than 200 people on the islands of Panay, Leyte, Mindanao and Bohol shortly before Christmas.

Environment Secretary Elisea Gozon said that while the massive loss of forest cover and geologic factors were partly responsible, those areas affected had until December avoided landslides even though farmers had been clearing upland areas since 1928 for coconut and other cash crops.

Gozon said the new elements were the record heavy rains that fell on Panay and the Surigao region in Mindanao.

"One should, however, point out that this unusually heavy rain is one concrete manifestation of climate change," Gozon said.

"Indeed, weather patterns all over the world have been changing—brought about by man's excessive release of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and methane.

"This is exacerbated by the fact

that there are fewer trees which serve as carbon sinks and absorb the carbon dioxide," she said.

President Macapagal-Arroyo's spokesperson on Thursday said the government was providing medium and long-term solutions in the disaster areas.

"Now we're talking about relocating the houses to which the disaster victims will transfer to because the places from which they came are now hardly habitable," said Ignacio Bunye.

The government will build houses for some of the disaster victims on Panay using bamboo and logs confiscated from illegal loggers, he said.

Bunye also said the government will engage in "massive reforestation" in these areas, using high school and college students to plant trees as a matter of course prior to graduation.

At the same time, the United Nations resident coordinator in Manila has met with officials of National Disaster Control Center on how the international agency could further assist the victims of the landslides.

Deborah Landey, UN resident coordinator, together with the UN Disaster Manage-

ment Team met with Gen. Melchor Rosales, administrator of the Office of Civil Defense and executive officer of the NDCC and his staff.

Landey confirmed that the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs had provided an emergency grant of \$50,000; the United Nations Children's

Fund \$100,000, and the UN Development Program (UNDP) \$25,000. The World Health Organization provided anti-malarial drugs to the Department of Health and the Food and Agricultural Organization promised support for an agricultural needs assessment survey. *With an AFP report*

Navy stops sea search

THE PHILIPPINE Navy yesterday said it was giving up the search for the 46 passengers still missing after the ML Piary sank on Dec. 14 near Palawan.

Navy spokesperson Commander Geronimo Malabanan said the Philippine Coast Guard was

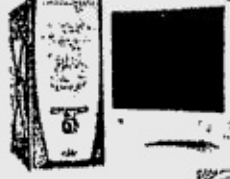
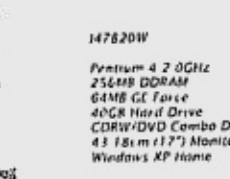
taking over the search and rescue operations for the missing.

The Navy said there was a big possibility there were no survivors and the bodies of the missing could have washed ashore in Palawan or Malaysia. *Alcun Papa*


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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 3316 Series of 2003

Estrada lawyers want prosecutor cited for contempt

By Armand N. Nocum

THE COURT-appointed lawyers of deposed President Joseph Estrada have asked the Sandiganbayan to cite a private prosecutor in contempt for allegedly besmirching the integrity of the anti-graft court when she questioned its decision allowing Estrada to undergo knee replacement surgery in the United States.

Former fiscal Jose Flaminiano, one of Estrada's lawyers, said that in criticizing the Dec. 23 decision of the Sandiganbayan's First Division, lawyer Marichu Lambino had placed the court in a "bad light."

"We will file a motion to cite Lambino in contempt for threatening to file administrative charges against the justices of the Sandiganbayan," Flaminiano told the Inquirer in an interview.

He said Lambino herself was liable for saying that the court was "guilty" of committing an "irregular and illegal act" when it allowed Estrada, who is facing plunder and graft charges, to leave for abroad.

"Lawyers should not say things that tend to degrade or put the court in a bad light," he said, noting that Lambino had also threatened to file administrative charges against four of the five justices who signed the resolution.

Lambino, a law professor at the University of the Philippines College of Law, earlier branded the special division's decision as "highly irregular."

According to her, the four justices "have a lot explaining to do" and they could be "liable administratively" for violation of rules.

Contacted by phone yesterday, Lambino stood by her statements, adding that she had convinced colleagues in the prosecution to file an administrative complaint against the justices for the decision which had the effect of granting bail to Estrada, who is charged with a non-bailable offense.

"All my clients with bailable offenses have to go to bail hearings before they can be granted bail. Here, Estrada is released without bail and bail hearings. That is irregular," she said.

Lambino explained that lawyers—like everybody else—were entitled to "analyze and criticize court decisions without using foul language."

"We can criticize court decisions so long as we don't use disrespectful language against the court," she said, adding that such exercise falls within the scope of her "freedom of expression."

Therefore, she said, there was nothing "contemptible" in her statements.

She also said that it was unfair for defense lawyers to ask that she be cited for contempt when Estrada was not being cited in contempt for questioning and criticizing the court's decisions.

But Flaminiano insisted that Lambino had committed a grave offense.

"A member of the bar should not be making those threats to the court. Let her answer for her statement," Flaminiano said.

B. Burgonio; 80

BIENVENIDO S. Burgonio, father of INQUIRER defense reporter TJ Burgonio, died on Dec. 31 after suffering a heart attack. He was 80.

He is survived by his wife Segundina, and other children Emmanuel, Geraldine, Marie Rose, Bernadette, Bienvenido Jr., Milagros, Benedicto, Exequiel and Esmeralda.

His body lies at the family residence in Santa, Ilocos Sur.

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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 3881, Series of 2003

Loren splits opposition

From page A1

earlier worked with another ex-senator, Juan Ponce Enrile, in an attempt to unite the opposition.

Both Tatad and Enrile have joined the KNP.

Tatad recalled what he called the "1992 experience."

"Initially, both (businessman Eduardo) Danding Cojuangco and "Erap" Estrada were running for president. But midway there was a change; Erap abandoned his presidential bid and agreed to be the vice presidential candidate and running mate of Danding. I don't know if that experience can be repeated, but I'm optimistic," he said.

"It has been a long walk for us, but we remain optimistic."

Measured praise

Opposition Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. welcomed Poe's choice with measured praise.

Pimentel, who is running for reelection on Poe's Senate slate, admitted that Legarda enjoyed immense popularity.

But he quickly added: "Loren, I think, suffers from the same major objections as Sen. Noli de Castro ... particularly on the issue of the Power Purchasing Adjustment (PPA)."

He noted that both Legarda and De Castro, who rose to popularity as broadcast anchors of the giant ABS-CBN television network, were associated with the Lopez business empire, which owns the Manila Electric Co. De Castro, better known as Kabayan (countryman), is running as President Macapagal-Arroyo's candidate for vice president.

But Legarda, when sought for comment, said: "I am not a signatory to the Epira law, which led to the imposition of the PPA, and I think that the PPA issue should be resolved in favor of the consumers."

The controversial Electric Power Industry Reform Act restructured the power business.

Loren's performance

Pimentel emphasized that Legarda had the edge over De Castro in terms of performance because the former had authored several laws on environment conservation, child workers' rights, women empowerment, agricultural productivity, among others.

De Castro is identified with only two or three bills in his first two and a half years in the Senate.

"But performance has never been a decisive factor in the choice of candidates," Pimentel said. "She has to work hard on her own. Performance in the Senate does not seem to be a



SENATOR Legarda poses as la Fernando Poe Jr. as she holds up a "love" letter from the action king inviting her to be his running mate in the May 10 presidential elections. She formally accepted the invitation during a press conference at the Manila Polo Club in Makati City Thursday.

ERIK ARAZAS

decisive criteria for the people to vote for a Senate performer."

He then urged Legarda to "build herself up."

"In other words, it's not a certainty that simply because she has been picked by FPJ, it will necessarily translate into an automatic victory (for her)."

Kabayan supporters

The Kabayan for Vice President Movement (KVPM) yesterday urged Legarda to reconsider her vice presidential draft and instead run for re-election in the Senate.

Isko Catibayan, KVPM spokesperson, said the country needed Legarda's leadership and

dynamism in the Senate, "which she could lead very soon as Senate President."

He added the KVPM could even help Legarda in her campaign for another six years in the Senate.

"We believe that Senator Loren should just consider serving as senator for another six years. She will top the Senate elections this May and she can be Senate President someday," Catibayan said in an interview. Legarda topped the Senate race in 1998.

"She is very young at 43 years of age. We need young and dynamic leaders in the Senate like her. We can even help her in her

campaign," Catibayan said.

"We disagree with Senator Pimentel's statement that even former Sen. Miriam Santiago can beat Kabayan. Senator Miriam, brilliant as she is, is a political has-been," Catibayan also said.

"She lost as a presidential candidate in 1992 and she also lost as senatorial candidate in 2001," he added.

Catibayan said that De Castro could have made a successful run for the presidency had he not decided to accept the President's draft.

"We believe that he would be the country's next vice president," Catibayan said. *With a report from Norman Bordonara*

Year of the Monkey will also be year of elections in Asia

BANGKOK, Thailand—Astrologers say 2004 is the Year of the Monkey, but it's also a year of elections in Asia.

Hundreds of millions will determine the shape of presidencies, governments and parliaments in about a dozen countries and territories. Depending on location, the ballots could be groundbreaking or mundane, tightly contested or predictable, orderly or chaotic and even downright violent.

"The question is whether these elections are going to contribute stability or instability," said Michael DeGolyer of the Hong Kong Baptist University. "I think we'll have an incredibly dynamic year all through Asia."

In Japan, a poll for the parliament's upper house won't directly threaten Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi. But it will test support for his spluttering plans to fix the world's second largest economy.

Up for judgment will also be his unprecedented deployment of 1,000 non-combat troops to Iraq despite Japan's postwar pacifism. Koizumi marked the New Year by praying at a shrine honoring his country's military dead, including its war criminals. The symbolic visit could worry some voters and anger regional neighbors conquered by Japan in World War II.

In India, the world's most populous democracy, 79-year-old Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee must name a date for 600 million people to vote.

His Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party leads a 17-party government and has won a spate of state elections recently. The unruly alliance has weathered bloody rioting among Hindus and Muslims and is reconciling with Pakistan just two years after they stepped back from nuclear war over ownership of divided Kashmir.

But as one flash point calms, another maybe about to flare.

A bitter tussle for Taiwan's presidency will be decided on March 20. At issue is the island's identity. Is it an independent sovereign nation? Or should it one day unite with China after splitting away 54 years ago amid civil war?

President Chen Shui-bian wants a rewritten Taiwanese constitution. And, on Thursday he pledged to go ahead with a referendum on election day that will ask Taiwanese whether China should stop pointing missiles at them.

This has infuriated Beijing and upset Washington. Both fear the referendum could lead to a separate vote on whether Taiwan should seek permanent, formal independence from China.

Polls suggest Chen is running neck and neck against challenger Lien Chan of the former ruling Nationalist Party, who says most Taiwanese don't want to antagonize China. But unrepentant, Chen has said his campaign for another term is "a battle between me and China's Communist Party."

In South Korea, an April 15 parliamentary election will be a landmark test for President Roh Moo-hyun, whose administration is in disarray only 11 months after he took office.

Roh promised to fight graft but he's been swept up in scandals involving aides indicted on charges of collecting illicit funds during his campaign.

The forthcoming election has also been clouded by the world's failure so far to get North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons program and Roh's unpopular decision to send 3,000 troops to Iraq.

In central Asia, a parliamentary election in December could highlight the real extent of democratic reform in Uzbekistan. Since deploying troops there in 2001 for the anti-terrorism operation in neighboring Afghanistan, the United States has been under pressure from international human rights groups to push President Islam Karimov to loosen his authoritarian grip.

In Afghanistan, elections slated for June are supposed to crown a UN-sponsored drive for stabilization after more than two decades of fighting.

Washington-backed interim President Hamid Karzai—facing the might of warlords and threats from Islamists linked to the old Taliban regime—is expected to stand.

"US strategy is centered on having Karzai in office," said Vikram Parekh of the Brussels-backed International Crisis Group.

Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, has a long sad history of election violence. And, security will be high when it tries out a new direct, but likely messy, voting system to pick its president.

Incumbent President Megawati Sukarnoputri, the daughter of the nation's founding leader, was swept to power as a pro-reform movement darling just three years ago. But Muslim extremism, including the 2002 Bali bombings that killed 202 people, has done much to destabilize her government.

It has done little to fix the economy, end separatist revolts and wipe out pervasive corruption.

Megawati is struggling to beat off a long, if lackluster, list of presidential hopefuls. They include old generals, Islamic politicians, two of her own sisters and even the daughter of the former dictator, Suharto, who was ousted in disgrace in 1998.

Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo also faces an uphill fight ahead of a May 10 election.

She's relied on military aid from Washington to move against Muslim extremism and communist insurgency and has enraged nationalists by supporting America's wars on terror and Iraq.

She's blamed two coup attempts against her on supporters of Joseph Estrada, the movie star president she ousted amid "people power" protests in January 2001.

As Estrada faces trial for corruption, one of his friends—another film idol, Fernando Poe Jr.—is running against her. Observers fear the election may degenerate into a popularity contest based on celebrity not policies.

In Malaysia, new Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi is likely to call elections by the end of the year. The government is almost certain to win, but there's growing support among some indigenous Malays for an ultraconservative Muslim party. Worried ethnic Chinese and Indian voters could turn away from Badawi's party. *AP*

Lim, Rasul, Herrera in 2 opposing slates

From page A1

conflict areas.

She holds a master's degree in business management from the Asian Institute of Management. She also attended the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

Rasul was director of the Development Bank of the Philippines and founding director of the Local Government Guarantee Corp.

She served as presidential adviser on youth affairs and chair of the National Youth Commission from 1994 to 1998 under President Fidel Ramos.

Assured slots

An official of the ruling Lakas-CMD party said Rasul and lawyer Pia Cayetano, the daughter of the late Sen. Renato Cayetano, were among several names included in the administration's short list.

Those already assured of slots in the slate are actors Ramon "Bong" Revilla, chair of the Videogram Regulatory Board, and Pampanga Gov.

Lito Lapid; reelectionists Sen. Robert Jaworski and Sen. Robert Barbers; former Trade Secretary Mar Roxas, Agrarian Reform Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan and former Defense Secretary Orlando Mercado.

Gordon as veep?

Lakas officials say Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon will also be included if he wants it. Gordon reportedly wanted to run for vice president. Presidential Adviser Heherson Alvarez, spokesperson of Lakas-CMD, is reportedly thinking of either running for the Senate or seeking a senior Cabinet position if Ms Macapagal wins a full term in 2004.

Cayetano, a 37-year-old lawyer and businesswoman, is a total political neophyte.

She has returned to a radio program she originally hosted with her late father. Reeling from the tragic death of her young son in 2000 and her father last year, Cayetano took up the cause of helping put up funds for sick children and a foundation for those

with kidney problems.

Her younger brother, Rep. Allan Peter Cayetano, said it was really Pia who took up their father's flair for public service.

But he said the death of Pia's son and later on that of their father pushed her to the background.

"But aside from my Dad's good name, she has a solid academic background," Representative Cayetano said.

He said his sister graduated cum laude from the University of the Philippines, where she also obtained a law degree.

She worked in Wall Street but was persuaded by her father to return to the country to practice law. She spent eight years practicing law, with the Castillo, Laman, Pantaleon Law Offices.

Gina says no

A third woman candidate was actually considered for the Lakas senatorial slate.

But Gina de Venecia, wife of Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr., declined the opportunity.

"I've decided to be there for my husband and children. It's hard if you have two politicians in the family," said Gina, head of the Congressional Spouses Foundation.

The Speaker, who benefits immensely from his wife's ability to mobilize people and resources, reportedly was the one who resisted the idea.

"I don't want to be accused of (having a) political dynasty," said De Venecia, president of Lakas-CMD which is chaired by the President.

Haven

"Besides, she has been helping a lot as a private citizen," the Speaker said. He noted that his wife has put up 15 branches of "The Haven" for abused women and neglected children nationwide, apart from building 17 buildings for them in Metro Manila and nearby regions.

Gina said one of her projects, "The Haven for Women", has helped in the rehabilitation of more than 6,000 abused women.

'Palace will become MTRCB'

From page A1

ticket" and even ridicule the team's show biz and media backgrounds as well as the vested interests they are said to represent.

The President, Lacson and former Sen. Raul Roco are pitted against the wildly popular Poe, referred to as "Da King," in what will be a four-cornered presidential contest in 2004.

The opposition camp the other day invited Legarda, the Senate majority leader who bolted the ruling Lakas Party to pursue her ambitions for higher office, to be Poe's running mate. She accepted the offer yesterday.

If the Poe-Legarda team wins, "Malacañang itself will become the MTRCB," Nograles said.

Movies, TV

"FPJ (Poe) is movies, Loren is television," Nograles said.

Lacson supporter Cavite Rep. Gilbert Remulla questioned the Poe-Legarda team's capability for higher office.

Least prepared

He said the two were the least prepared to take on the two highest positions in the land.

"You have a standard-bearer who is ambivalent about running, to say the least," said Remulla, referring to Poe.

"You have a multi-faceted per-

sonality who is looking for an identity," he said of Legarda.

Remulla and Legarda were media colleagues at the ABS-CBN television before joining politics. Remulla was a reporter while Legarda was a newsreader.

Qualifications

Poe has been attacked for, among other things, being a high school drop-out; lacking experience in politics and administra-

tion; being an alleged dummy of his buddy, jailed ex-President Estrada; and for failing to come up with a credible campaign platform.

With her decision to jump to the opposition, Legarda, who was with the ranks of the pro-impeachment senators during the Estrada impeachment trial, is viewed by some quarters as ambitious.

Legarda's long association with the ABS-CBN television sta-

tion has also identified her with the politicians allied to the politically and economically influential Lopez family that owns the network.

Remulla conceded, however, that the Poe-Legarda ticket was "on the surface ... a strong ticket."

"But they lack the political organization to back them up unlike GMA [Ms Macapagal] and Ping Lacson, who both have strong machineries," he said. *Carlito Pablo*

Phone firms buck list-up of pre-paid subscribers

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

THE COUNTRY'S mobile phone providers are strongly resisting a move by Malacañang to force all pre-paid phone users to register in a bid to deter the use of cellular phones in criminal activities, specifically kidnappings.

Federation of Filipino Chinese Chamber of Commerce executive vice president Francis Chua said President Macapagal-Arroyo was "all-out" for the mandatory registration of all pre-paid phone users.

Chua said the President agreed with the business sector and the Chinese-Filipino community that this would be a strong deterrent to kidnapping by making it difficult for criminals to use mobile phones in their nefarious activities, specifically kidnappings.

Chua said there was no reason the Philippines could not implement a cell phone registration system when other countries have adopted this system without a hitch.

There are more than 20 million cell phone users in the Philippines with 90 percent of them pre-paid subscribers.

Chua, however, said the tougher regulation is being vigorously opposed by lawyers of mobile providers, particularly of Smart Communications and Globe Telecoms who argued that forcing buyers of pre-paid SIM packs to register would affect their sales and this was not a fool-proof system to track down criminals.

"It might not be fool-proof but at least it would make criminals think twice before using their phones in engaging in illegal activities," Chua said.

Chua also noted that mandatory registration would actually benefit mobile phone providers because it would force buyers to buy their units and SIM packs from authorized dealers.

Chua said the mandatory registration would also discourage cellular phone theft because mobile phone providers could block the electronic ID—the International Mobile Equipment Identification or IMEI—and render the phone units useless.

At present, only post-paid subscribers could have their units locked because they provide the operators with their personal information which makes it easier to establish the ownership of a stolen phone.

FBI: Nothing on 2 brothers linked to terror

THE US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has nothing on the two American brothers arrested in Tanza, Cavite, last Dec. 13 on suspicion they were terrorists, but is investigating one of them.

Officials told The Associated Press on Tuesday the FBI was looking into whether one of the brothers, Michael Ray Stubbs, 55, who had worked at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, had access to sensitive information, but an FBI agent in San Francisco, California, said there were no charges pending against him or his brother, James.

The two were arrested on suspicion of financing the Muslim insurgency in the southern Philippines.

Immigration Commissioner Andrea Domingo had said at a news conference on Tuesday that James Stubbs had met with members of the Abu Sayyaf extremist group and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, two groups loosely linked by US and Philippine officials to the al-Qaida terror network of Osama bin Laden.

Domingo said the two had arrived in the Philippines on tourist visas and had been under surveillance, but they also carried documents indicating that they were soliciting funds to build Muslim schools and mosques.

Philippine military intelligence reports said James Stubbs' local contacts had asked him for help in getting money from US-based Muslim groups, purportedly for helping Muslim communities in Mindanao.

Domingo had admitted that there was no evidence linking the men to any past or planned terrorist plots, but said James Stubbs had called for the overthrow of the United States government in statements to local authorities.

Michael Ray Stubbs had worked as a heating and air conditioning technician at Livermore outside San Francisco, California, for about 10 years until 2000, a laboratory spokesperson said. The lab does nuclear weapons research for the US government.

The brothers, handcuffed and wearing yellow "detainee" shirts, were present at the news conference. At one point, James Stubbs shouted: "These are all fabricated lies!" He told reporters he was in the Philippines to be with his pregnant wife, Eloisa Olga, a Filipino citizen. **AP**

A. Rosales; 69

ALFONSO "Onching" V. Rosales of Bocaue, Bulacan, brother of Daily Tribune reporter Angie Rosales, died on Dec. 28, 2003 at the age of 69.

He is survived by his wife Erlinda; children Yolly, Alex, Thelma, Aileen, Louie and Rachelle; brothers Rogelio, Jaime, Eddie, Edgar, Emman and Edmond; other sisters Celia, Zenaida, Anita, Corazon, Amelita, Cita, Emie and Tetchie, and other relatives.

His body lies at the family residence at 54 Binan I, Bocaue, Bulacan. Interment will take place on Jan. 3 at 3 p.m. at the Garden of Peace Memorial Park in Bulacan.

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE COUNTRY'S top cop's declaration that the country was "jueteng free" has elicited disbelief even from his own men.

In his yearend report, Philippine National Police chief Hermodenes Ebdane Jr. claimed that 86 of the 94 provincial police districts were now free of the illegal numbers game, as certified by local government, police officials and religious leaders.

A senior PNP officer, however, said that although the figures were "believable," Ebdane's anti-jueteng drive was a "hard sell."

During a Dec. 22 media briefing to announce updates on the anti-jueteng campaign, Ebdane appeared to lose his

cool after he asked if the PNP was indeed close to weeding out jueteng.

"We're doing it so what's the question now?" he had snapped. "What we are presenting to you are the data. Perhaps the best thing for you to do is to counter-check it with the local level, may be in the provinces."

Several police officers were also puzzled as to why Ebdane "suddenly" made illegal gambling his top priority, 17 months after he assumed the top PNP position, according to a senior police official.

"He had all the time but how come he moved only now?" a police general asked.

Behind Ebdane's back, he said, several field commanders were questioning why the PNP

chief was pressuring them to eliminate jueteng and other forms of illegal gambling in their jurisdictions when there were "more pressing matters" to deal with.

"I became even more perplexed when I saw that the anti-gambling campaign was on top of the list of our accomplishments for the year," the general said.

In the yearend report released to the media on Monday, he said Ebdane should have centered on the PNP's gains against terrorism, street crimes, drug trafficking, bank robberies, and other forms of criminality.

The source said Ebdane may have been "pushed" into the drive by the reported threat of PNP Director Eduardo Matil-

lano to do a "Chavit" if he were sacked as chief of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group.

The source did not elaborate but another senior police official backed this theory.

The second official, who is identified with Sen. Panfilo Lacson, claimed that Matillano had met with former Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson and at least three other top PNP officers at the Manila Yacht Club to "cook up something" against Ebdane.

Singson rose to national prominence in late 2000 when he admitted being a "bag man" for then President Joseph Estrada in the collection of kickbacks from jueteng operations nationwide. The expose eventually

led to Estrada's downfall.

The Manila Yacht Club meeting, the source claimed, took place at the height of the controversy over Ebdane's decision to reshuffle 32 officers, including Matillano, early last month.

Matillano denied the alleged meeting in an interview with the Inquirer earlier last month.

After the supposed meeting, Matillano went public and demanded Ebdane's resignation for alleged incompetence and corruption.

Ebdane responded by sacking him as CIDG chief, only to pluck him out of floating status the following day after President Macapagal-Arroyo mediated a reconciliatory meeting between the two officials.

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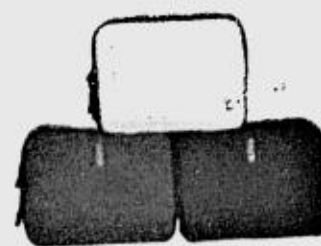
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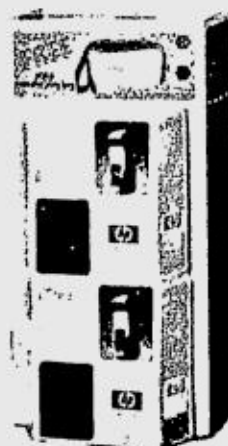
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New Year's Eve revelry 'generally peaceful'

From page A1

New Year's Eve firecracker accident victims numbered 804 and 21 were injured from stray bullets, according to Razon. He said this was a 200-percent increase from such incidents nationwide for the same period last year.

Suffer the kids

Almost half of the New Year's Eve firecracker blast victims in Metro Manila were children, said health officials who noted that the 590 injuries recorded from Dec. 21, 2003 to Jan. 1 marked an 11-percent increase from the 531 cases in 2002, breaking the trend of decreasing injuries for the past four years.

Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit said the only way to stop the bloody revelry was to ban fireworks.

"If we can't totally ban fireworks, we can't bring down the injuries from the current level. It looks like 500 is the resistance point," Dayrit said at a news conference yesterday.

"As long as you have fireworks sold legally, you will always have injuries ... It's a reality we have to live with," he said.

Deadliest

The deadliest incident linked to the New Year's Eve revelry was the fire that gutted a row of commercial establishments in Lucena City early Wednesday which police said was set off by a firecracker buyer testing a product. The missile-like firecracker hit a power line, then zigzagged back to ignite a row of pyrotechnics displayed on sidewalk stalls.

The 18 people who were killed were trapped inside burning buildings. Authorities said the death toll could still rise as 22 people were still missing.

Chief Inspector Josepito Albos, the Quezon provincial fire marshal, said firefighters were not even aware that there were people trapped inside the burning buildings.

"The fire spread so quickly due to several LPG tank explosions inside the burning buildings," he said.

No info drive

Razon blamed the rise in firecracker-related injuries to the government's indifferent information campaign against the dangers of pyrotechnics.

"There were less commercials showing victims of firecrackers. These campaigns were the reason for the low figures in 2002," he said.

In the run-up to New Year's Eve, the government urged the public to leave guns at home and take care with fire-



Ten-year-old Ernesto Bautista grimaces in pain while doctors treated him at East Avenue Medical Center in Quezon City. Bautista suffered serious injury when he picked up unexploded firecrackers in Litex, Fairview.

EDWIN BACASHAS

crackers as newspapers ran photos of hands missing fingers and other grisly injuries.

Guns muzzled

Even police officers faced scrutiny after eight were arrested last year for firing weapons in the air. This time, tape was put over gun muzzles so commanders could tell who broke the rules.

At least five people, including a mem-

ber of the Eastern Police District, were arrested for allegedly firing guns indiscriminately in the run-up to New Year. The policeman now faces dismissal. Two of the five were security guards from Malabon.

Failed target

The Department of Health sought to bring down the number of firecracker-related injuries to less than half of the 531

cases in 2002 but failed to do so because of the accessibility of firecrackers and the non-visibility of its Oplan Iwas Papatok campaign ads.

The campaign, which monitors cases in 50 hospitals all over the country, ran advertisements in major networks but the ads last year were not shown until Dec. 30.

Dayrit said that local firecracker manufacturers have more retail outlets now

and are selling the firecrackers piece-meal so that even children are able to buy them.

About 41 percent of the injured were children. The youngest, aged 10 months, suffered minor injuries from lighting sparklers in San Fernando, La Union.

'Complex'

Dayrit said that if the government cannot ban the sale of firecrackers, which he said was a "complex" undertaking, it should focus on implementing ordinances that would make it safe to handle firecrackers.

The injuries reported on New Year's Eve itself, from 7 p.m. Dec. 31 to 7 a.m. Jan. 1 dropped 7 percent from 360 in 2002 to 336 last year. Two of those injured from stray bullets are in critical condition.

Of the 590 cases last year, 566 were due to firecrackers, 15 to stray bullets and nine to watusi (dancing firecracker) ingestion. The oldest victim was a 92-year-old man who swallowed watusi.

Metro Manila registered the highest number of incidents, with Manila accounting for 161 cases, Quezon City 75 and Valenzuela 27.

Lower count

The number of firecracker-related casualties dropped in Central and Northern Luzon in 2003, compared to the year before.

Reports from the police offices in Central Luzon, Ilocos, Cordillera and Cagayan Valley showed that at least 182 people were hurt in firecracker blasts and fires during New Year's Eve.

Fires were reported in the cities of Dagupan and Baguio and in Nueva Vizcaya. One person was reported hurt in the Baguio fire. A policeman was ordered disarmed by his superiors after he fired his gun in Quezon, Isabela.

Central Luzon police reported only 128 people hurt in firecracker blasts this year, compared to last year's 186 injured and one fatality.

The Visayas reported 147 injured, three of them from stray bullets.

Two people were injured in General Santos City while one man was reported to have died in a gun attack and six people injured in the revelry in Cotabato City. Reports from Delfin Mallari, PDI Southern Luzon Desk, Villamor Visaya Jr., Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes, Leoncio Balbin Jr., Desiree Caluza and Ray Zambrano, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau, and Anselmo Roque, Carmela Reyes and Allan Macatuno, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Opposition boasts of 'powerhouse' slate

From page A1

tion's lineup of Senate candidates as a "powerhouse."

"As what political analysts say about an FPJ-Legarda tandem, the senatorial slate is also unbeatable," she said.

One of those on the list, opposition leader Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr., predicted certain victory for Poe's Senate slate.

"The team, certainly, has big names in the political arena whom we can call heavyweights," Pimentel noted that most of the candidates were identified with deposed President Joseph Estrada.

Aside from Pimentel, two other reelectionist senators were in the lineup: John Osmena and Teresa Aquino-Oreta. The list also included three ex-senators making a comeback bid: Miriam Defensor-Santiago, Francisco Tatad and Juan Ponce Enrile.

All of the candidates, except for Pimentel, supported Estrada during his impeachment trial in the Senate.

Not complete

But the other half of the 12-person ticket was not yet complete, with the opposition said to be choosing from about a dozen prospects.

Senators Edgardo Angara and Vicente Sotto III said it was possible that the lineup will not be ready by today, when Poe and Legarda file their certificates of candidacy.

Angara and Sotto said that, all told, the total number of senatorial nominees reached 19. They did not identify who the nominees were, but said the list included three reelectionist senators and four returning senators.

But Angara confirmed that House Minority Leader Carlos Padilla, who is supporting the presidential bid of opposition Sen. Panfilo Lacson, was also a nominee.

Sources identified the other possible candidates as ex-senators Ernesto Maceda and Ernesto Her-



POLITICAL SEASON. Sen. Panfilo Lacson meets with former Manila Mayor Alfredo Lim who is reported to be one of the Lakas-CMD as well as the opposition's candidates for the Senate. The meeting took place Monday night in Greenhills, San Juan.

BOY CABRERO

reira, former Mayors Alfredo Lim and Jinggoy Estrada, ex-candidate Jamby Madrigal, Muslim leaders Amina Rasul and Maguindanao Rep. Didagen Dilangalen, and Ilocos Norte Rep. Imee Marcos.

Party-less candidates

At a press briefing at the Manila Polo club, Legarda formally accepted Poe's invitation to serve as his vice presidential candidate.

Legarda said she and Poe, both party-less, would run as independents under the KNP, which is an alliance of three opposition parties.

Angara said the Poe-Legarda tandem was a "powerful combination," while Sotto called it a "formidable team."

"It's a more balanced team in terms of their popularity, track record, and competence," said Angara, who is also chair of the KNP national executive committee.

Love letters

At the conference, Legarda read what she called a "love letter" that Poe gave her on New Year's Eve.

"I can with all conviction say that I believe that you have the makings of a good Vice President who will continuously devote her time, talents and efforts in service of the Filipino nation," Poe had written.

"Let our goal together be to transcend even our greatest potentials not only as individuals but as a team," Poe said.

Legarda told reporters that she was accepting Poe's invitation, and described the actor known as Da King as "humble, sincere and a man of integrity" and someone with a "sincere compassion for the downtrodden."

What she said she also liked about Poe was his "independence of mind" as well as his determination to have a government that is transparent and one that is not prone to making deals or entangling itself with cronies.

"We share the same core values," she also said at one point.

Poe, Legarda said, is the "key to the country's unity."

"I hope and I pray that Ronnie and I would serve our nation in

2004," she said.

Present at the briefing was Legarda's father and two brothers. She said her husband, businessman Tony Leviste, was "at home watching over our two kids."

Two meetings

Legarda said Poe called her up on the night of Dec. 30 to arrange a meeting at a restaurant in Greenhills, San Juan.

Because she came from an engagement in Cardona, Rizal, Legarda arrived at midnight. At the restaurant was Poe's wife, movie actress Susan Rocas, as well as San Juan Mayor JV Ejercito, a son of Estrada's, and broadcast executive Angelo Castro.

Legarda said that when she met Ejercito, she took the initiative and embraced him.

Asked at the briefing why she had chosen to run with Poe, Legarda said: "Because I believe that he can unify our people and heal our wounded and divided nation."

Legarda said she left the ruling Lakas-CMD party in October last year not for political expediency,



RASUL

but "to give me the freedom to exercise my role as legislator without having to be subjected to partisan political pressures at the time."

She noted that a Poe candidacy was non-existent at the time, "so it was more of a personal than a political decision."

In the end, she said she decided to run for vice president in order to be of "greater service to the country."

Running for vice president, she said, was "more challenging" and entailed facing bigger responsibilities and she is "not one to shirk responsibilities."

"It would be easier to run for (reelection in) the Senate ... but if you have the calling, I accept the challenge," she added.

Personal choice

Sotto said it was Poe who was personally selecting the senatorial candidates. "We submitted nominations, but FPJ is the one choosing his slate."

Pimentel said the opposition senatorial candidates have "stature" and enjoyed the effects of "name recall."

"These people have their own following. So if you add the drawing power of FPJ, you have the makings of a senatorial rout."

Asked about the negative effect of their association with Estrada, he said: "Considering the sad state of



HERRERA

the administration senatorial bets, those negative perceptions could very well be sidelined by the steam-roller effect of an FPJ campaign for his senatorial candidates."

Pimentel said he was optimistic that Poe's popularity could trickle down to his senatorial slate, and translate into votes come election time.

Friendly fight

Legarda said she believes the vice presidential contest would be a "friendly fight."

The senator said she and Poe agreed to play it clean against their opponents. "We want to elevate the level of politics," she told reporters. Legarda noted that she had "not played dirty in the six years" of her stay in the Senate.

"I sincerely believe that I have not made enemies in my six years in the Senate," she said.

And she said she is good friends with De Castro.

Asked whether they seek advice from one another, Legarda said that she and De Castro did talk about the issue of running for vice president.

She recalled that De Castro told her to go ahead, because he was not interested in the vice presidency.

"I thought he was not interested," she said. "But anyone has the right to change his mind, just like what the President did."

With reports from Reuters, AFP

Pope calls for new int'l order based on UN goals

From page A1

thoughts to continuing conflicts around the globe. But he stressed that to bring about peace, there needs to be a new respect for international law and the creation of a "new international order" based on the goals of the United Nations.

He called for "an order that is able to give adequate solutions to today's problems based on the dignity of the human being, on an integral development of society, on solidarity among nations rich and poor, on the sharing of resources and the extraordinary results of scientific and technical progress."

Burundi murder

The pope lamented continuing violence between Israel and the Palestinians, and also offered his prayers for his ambassador to Burundi, Archbishop Michael Courtney, who was gunned down by assailants this week as he returned from a funeral.

John Paul said Courtney was killed "while he carried out his mission in favor of dialogue and reconciliation" in the central African country, which has been wracked by violence for a decade.

"Let us pray for him, hoping that his example and sacrifice will bring about the fruits of peace in Burundi and the world," he said.

Earlier this month, John Paul issued a formal document marking the World Day of Peace in which he called for a reform of the United Nations and international law to deal with the evolving threat of terrorism.

He said a new respect for international law was the only way to achieve peace and guarantee against the arbitrary use of force. He didn't mention the United States by name, but his message appeared aimed at the US anti-terrorism campaign—and in particular at Washington's pre-emptive war in Iraq, which was launched without the specific authorization of the United Nations.

John Paul was a vocal critic of the Iraq war, dispatching envoys to Washington and Baghdad to try to



POPE John Paul II waves as he arrives at the altar to preside the Te Deum prayer at the St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City on Wednesday.

REUTERS

prevent hostilities from breaking out and exhorting world leaders that war wasn't inevitable and was "always a defeat for humanity."

Iraq war critic

"Because peace is possible ... it is necessary," he said during his homily Thursday.

The New Year's Mass was the last major celebration of the Christmas season for John Paul, who is 83 and suffers from Parkinson's disease, which makes it difficult for him to speak, as well as knee and hip ailments that make it almost impossible for him to walk or stand.

He cut back some of his holiday activities and scrapped two traditional papal events—the ordination of bishops Jan. 6 and baptisms on Jan. 11.

On Wednesday, the pope called for world peace during a year-end thanksgiving ceremony

in Saint Peter's Basilica.

Tight security

"Mary, queen of peace, bring us days of peace for the city of Rome, for Italy, for Europe and for the whole world," the 83-year-old pontiff said with marked difficulty due to the Parkinson's disease from which he suffers.

Tight security surrounded St. Peter's at the service, during which the pontiff appeared on relatively good form thanks to a lighter workload over the Christmas period, as recommended by his doctors.

This included canceling general audiences on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve.

Several thousand worshippers attended the traditional Te Deum at which Rome's mayor, on behalf of Roman citizens, gave a present to the pontiff as head of the church and Bishop of Rome.

In his homily, the pope ex-

pressed the wish that families and above all young married couples should receive encouragement and that the family should continue to "correspond to God's project."

Tight security followed a reported warning by Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi on Saturday that there might be a suicide attack on the Vatican on Christmas Day.

"Serenity wins the day in the Vatican in the face of such threats," said the apostolic preacher Raniero Cantalamessa on television. "And the pope is also a courageous man."

Force of law

In a message two weeks ago he condemned use of force as a sole instrument against terrorism but expressed support for sanctions against governments guilty of hu-

man rights abuses.

"International law must ensure that the law of the more powerful does not prevail," the pope cautioned in his statement.

The pope said it was necessary for states to avoid the "temptation to appeal to the law of force rather than to the force of law."

"Democratic governments know well that the use of force against terrorists cannot justify a renunciation of the principles of the rule of law."

"The fight against terrorism cannot be limited solely to repres-

sive and punitive operations," the pope added.

He also recalled the United Nations charter, which "confirms the natural right to legitimate defense to be exercised in specific ways and in the context of the United Nations."

The UN Security Council had responsibility for collective security with "competence and responsibility for the preservation of peace, with power of decision and ample discretion." With reports from AP and AFP

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All hands on deck for pols running for office

From page A1

tends to resemble "a key to an opening in heaven for more powers."

Since the '90s, Simbulas has been one of the resource persons regularly sought by TV shows and the print media for their New Year predictions, feng shui tips, astrological readings, or "visions." She currently hosts a weekly AM radio program but is busy of late as a "life and aura" reader.

Cory's Laban sign

As for the famous Laban or "L" sign made popular by then President Cory Aquino, Simbulas regrettably noted that it symbolizes the great distance between "Earth and the Air (above)."

It conveys being "unapproachable (suplada)—your feet appears to be on the ground but other people cannot seem to reach you," she said. That there are three fingers pointing downwards also connotes "enormous yet wasted efforts," she added.

Thumbs up

Some words of caution to those who use the "thumbs-up" sign: It's a great force of "attraction, yes, but for what purpose? It says 'come with me wherever I want to take you.'"

The "clenched fist" sign could mean that whoever uses it is "a dangerous person who's ready to fight."

The raised open palm when "praying over" someone, "invokes higher beings, which may be either positive or negative, depending on one's spiritual bearings."

"For not all who pray attract positive (energies)," she said.

Hitler's hand signal

Adolf Hitler adopted this hand sign as the Nazi party salute for "he knew it was for control and mass hypnotism," Simbulas explained.

This coming Year of the Monkey, according to her, fittingly has the characteristics expected of an election year.

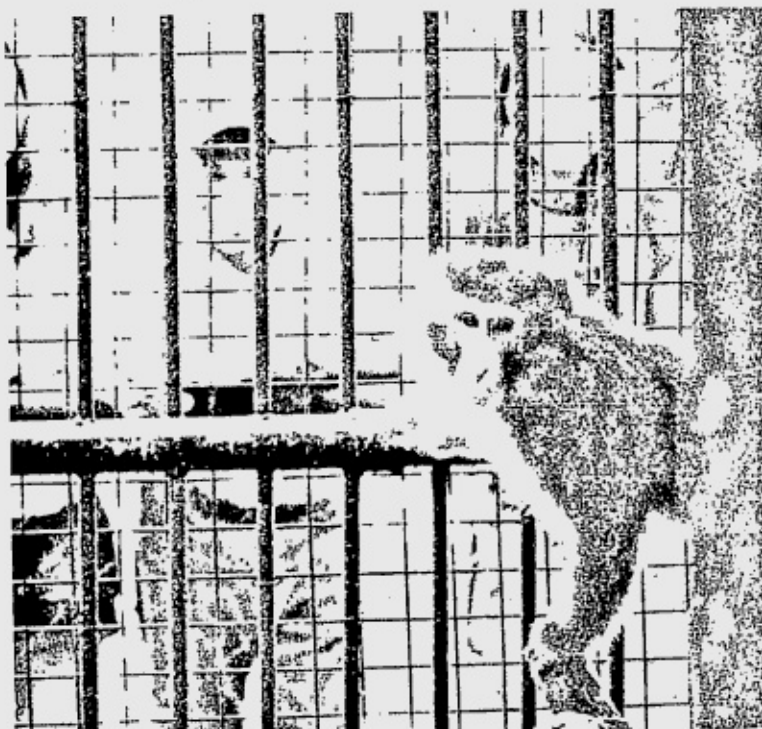
The monkey's "natural craftiness will come out" in people, she said when asked for her political forecast.

Hidden talents

"Hidden talents will finally be put to use when it comes to discerning and exploiting other people's weaknesses."

But then, she said, "nobody will really feel tired or hurt by attacks left and right, for there will be a 'Wild Wild West' level of boldness. Many superiority complexes or *kayabangan* (boasting) will be revealed."

From INQUIRER references, the Year



YEAR of the monkey. Teenagers look at a Japanese red-faced monkey at the Manila Zoo on Wednesday.

AFP

of the Monkey [which, strictly speaking, won't start until Jan. 21 according to the Chinese calendar] is described as "a time of power, courage, anarchy, and true devotion even to the wildest of schemes."

Peanuts

"Everyone wants to work the shrewdest angle, get the best deal, and win big ... Woe to the gullible or dull witted! Monkey will gleefully steal all the peanuts and leave nothing but empty shells," one Internet material warned.

"There will be success even in impossible ventures, there will be inventions and improvisations galore. Politics, diplomacy, high finance and business will be engaged in one big poker game with everyone trying to out bluff each other ... Monkey is one who can laugh off his mistakes and improve his bargaining prowess in the next round," according to a Chinese tourism literature.

"This is a year that will find us all trying to get a better deal by outsmarting the other man. It is hard to keep track of who is winning, as the right hand has no idea of what the left hand is up to. One thing is sure, this will be an extremely progressive time. We will all steam ahead, and even if we do not apply ourselves to the utmost, we will be carried forward by the surging tide of the Monkey's natural talent for learning and

advancement," it added.

Election year

Not surprisingly, the last Monkey year saw national elections being held in the Philippines. It was in 1992 when Fidel V. Ramos became President and Joseph Estrada was elected vice president.

Other "Monkey" milestones in Philippine history were either pivotal or politically charged:

- The start of the revolution against Spain and execution of national hero Jose Rizal (1896);

- The US Senate passes bill seeking the grant of Philippine Independence, sponsored by Senators Harry Hawes and Bronson Cutting (1932).

- Gen. Douglas MacArthur fulfilled his "I shall return" promise and liberated the country from the Japanese in WWII (1944).

- The Communist Party of the Philippines was founded (1968).

- Left-leaning labor group Kilusang Mayo Uno was organized (1980).

The University of the Philippines was also established in a Monkey year (1908), and so was massive 1932 demonstration led by UP law student Wenceslao Vinzon against "smuggled provisions" in the appropriations act increasing the salaries of the members of the House of Representatives. With research by Armin Adina

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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 7, 2004

QUEZON CITY
 BETWEEN 8:00AM AND 8:30AM AND THEN BETWEEN 12:30PM AND 1:00PM - PORTION OF CIRCUIT DILIMAN 43VU

Along B.F. Homes Road, V.S. Encarnacion, V. Salazar, S. Benito Sts and Sampaguita Ave. from near Don Mariano Marcos Ave. (Commonwealth) to and including Chico St., Granwood Villas, Dona Romana B.F. Homes, School of the Holy Spirit, Magre Subd., Mapayapa Village I & II, Isadora Hills, Kapalaran Subd. and Dona Juana Subd. in Bgy. Holy Spirit.

BETWEEN 8:00AM AND 1:00PM - PORTION OF CIRCUIT DILIMAN 43VU
 Portion of Sampaguita Ave. from Leonora St. to and including Fern Village, Silverland Village I, Central Bank Employees Homes, Mapayapa Village III, Dona Petrona Subd., Hobart Subd., Pingkian Village and FEU Compound in Bgy. Pasong Tamo and Holy Spirit.

REASON: Replacement of rotten pole and resagging of lines along Sampaguita and Narra Sts. in Mapayapa Village.

THURSDAY TO FRIDAY, JANUARY 8-9, 2004

QUEZON CITY (NOVALICHES)
 BETWEEN 11:30PM AND 12:00AM (THU., 01/08/04) AND THEN BETWEEN 5:00AM AND 5:30AM (FRI., 01/09/04) - PORTION OF CIRCUIT NOVALICHES 48YJ

Portion of Quirino Highway from Meralco-Quirino substation near Taurus St. to Gen. Luis Ave. Portion of Quirino Highway to and including Pasacola St., Ayala Integrated Steel, A. Cruz, T.S. Cruz Subd., Interville Subd., MCB Subd., A.C. Homes, Dona Isaura Subd., Ramirez Compound, Dona Rosano Heights Subd., Buenavista Subd. and Millionaire's Ville.

Portion of Susano Road from Gen. Luis Ave. to and including Magno Subd., De Jesus Compound, Novaliches Plaza Market and Mall in Novaliches Town Proper.

BETWEEN 11:30PM (THU., 01/08/04) AND 5:30AM (FRI., 01/09/04) - PORTION OF CIRCUIT

NOVALICHES 48YJ

Portion of Quirino Highway from near Gen. Luis Ave. to and including San Francisco St., ABC Channel 5, Nomas Subd. 1 & 2, Rockville II Subd., San Pedro Subd. 7 in Bgy. San Bartolome; Uniwid, Pascual Liner, Mabuhay Feed Mills, Menrey - Sta. Monica Vill., Royal Tatung Ceramics, Rainbow Village 2, Vazquez Compound, Chudan Subd., Villa Veronica, Carmen Court, Natwid Subd., Riveraville Subd., Homeland Happy Homes 2, Home Sweet Homes, Gabriel State Subd., Forest Hills Subd., Santiago Subd., Aguardiente and Villalor Subd. in Bgy. Guio.

REASON: Relocation of poles to clear loading and unloading area of Public School along Quirino Highway in Novaliches, Quezon City.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 9, 2003

CAVITE (TERNATE)
 BETWEEN 9:00AM AND 3:00PM - THE WHOLE OF CIRCUIT PUERTO AZUL 33XX

Palestina # 5 Deepwell Pumphouse, Camandag Pumphouse, Ternate Dev'l Corp. Field Office, Mira Hills Subdivision, Ocean View Villas, Puerto Azul Beach and Country Club, Puerto Azul Sports Complex, Cluster Hotel Bldg., Puerto Azul Beach Hotel, Utility Bldg., Caysubic Cottages, Paniman Pump-house and Dr. R. E. Panlilio Rest House.

REASON: Repair work inside Meralco-Puerto Azul substation.

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The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

5 killed in car bomb explosion in Baghdad

BAGHDAD—Five people were killed and two dozens wounded, including several Westerners, when a powerful car bomb ripped through a popular Baghdad restaurant packed with New Year's Eve revelers.

Witnesses said they saw several bodies in the rubble of the Nabil restaurant in the upmarket Karrada district of Baghdad, which was gutted by Wednesday night's blast less than three hours before the clock ticked over to 2004.

Iraqi police lieutenant Amir Bashir said five people were killed, while Sarmad Mozaffer, a doctor at Ibn Nafiz hospital said three foreigners, an American and two Britons, were among the 24 wounded in the blast.

The deadly attack shattered Baghdad even though Iraqi police and US occupation forces had bolstered security for

fear of more attacks over the New Year holiday as guerrillas pressed their campaign against the US-led occupation.

Among the wounded were three Los Angeles Times correspondents and four staff members of the newspaper's Baghdad bureau. The paper said none was seriously injured.

Flames and smoke spewed into the night sky, swallowing up one car parked at the restaurant. Sirens wailed as fire engines and police lined the street, while several people wandered around in shock, with blood staining their clothes and faces.

"It was a van loaded with approximately 180 kg of explosives and artillery shells. It destroyed a restaurant in central Baghdad in the vicinity of 9:22 p.m.," a spokesperson for the US coalition said.

The Karrada district has been hit by two roadside bombs in the past four

days that killed three Iraqis, two of them children.

US President George W. Bush, meanwhile, was to confer with close friend and special envoy James Baker at Bush's Texas ranch on New Year's Day. Baker recently made trips to Europe and Asia in search of commitments to ease Iraq's \$120-billion debt.

Wednesday's restaurant bombing in Baghdad was the deadliest attack since Dec. 27, when five Bulgarian soldiers and two Thais were killed along with 12 Iraqis in a multiple car bomb and mortar attack in the central city of Karbala.

More than eight months after the fall of Baghdad, US troops are still battling an insurgency, despite the capture of former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein on Dec. 13, and US forces said they had received intelligence warnings of attacks in the run-up to the Christmas and New Year holidays. **AFP**

Aftershocks jolt Iran quake town

BAM, Iran—Aftershocks jolted the Iranian city of Bam on Thursday "like an underground train hitting a bad piece of track" as survivors of its devastating earthquake prepared to commemorate some of the estimated 30,000 who died.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was due to hold a memorial service on Thursday afternoon in Bam, 1,000 km southeast of Tehran, for those killed in Iran's worst natural

disaster for at least 13 years.

"It felt like an underground train hitting a bad piece of track," one witness said after four aftershocks shook the ancient Silk Road city overnight following last Friday's quake.

Medics and the Iranian army said on Wednesday that at least five people, including an 80-year-old woman, had been pulled alive from the rubble in Bam in the last 48 hours.

But officials said the death toll

from one of the worst disasters of recent decades may climb to 50,000 and most rescue teams have abandoned the search for more survivors.

UN officials said about 40,000 people were now left in Bam—most spending the bitterly cold nights in tents—out of an original population of 103,000. The remainder were either dead, missing, in hospital or had left town. **Reuters**



RUSSIANS celebrate New Year 2004 on Red Square in Moscow, early Jan. 1. **AFP**

2004 will be better than past year, Asian stargazers predict

BEIJING—After a tumultuous 2003, the world this year will free itself of major wars and the global economy will accelerate as a new cycle of good fortune is ushered in, astrologers across Asia predict.

Stargazers agree that the coming 12 months cannot fare much worse than the saw-saw ride that the world went through in 2003, dogged by war in Iraq, fluctuating financial markets and mysterious diseases.

"On the whole, 2004 will be better than 2003," said Hong Kong-based Feng Shui Master Ma Li-wah, when asked about what the Year of the Monkey will bring.

"2004 will herald in a new fortune cycle. The global economy will continue to improve for the better with small enterprises expected to benefit most."

The political front is also expected to be a lot calmer, said the master.

"Although conflicts around the world will continue, like in Iraq, there will be no new major wars emerging. So the political situation is likely to see some stabilization in the year to come."

While astrological predictions are often dismissed as superstitious nonsense, millions of people swear by what mystics say and Yue Hua, an astrologer from Nanyang in China's Hunan province, spoke in the same tongue as Ma.

No major wars

"I think there will be no major wars next year," said Yue, but warned: "Corrupt people better watch out as many will be caught."

One of the major drivers of the world economy last year was emerging China and astrologers see the developing nation continuing its juggernaut drive.

"In the year of 2004, China's economic growth rate will be 7.4 percent to nine percent. In the months of March, May, July, September and November, robust economic

growth will be witnessed," said Song Qigong, a mystic from Heze in China's Shandong province.

"The industry of real estate will peak while the industry of textile and garment industries will be sluggish."

Yue from Hunan agreed: "I think economic development will speed up in China and more young people will join government service. The mining industry will also flourish next year."

Riches in mid-2004

Fortune-tellers in India are counting on Saturn to play a key role to boost that country's worth.

Some however warn the riches will come only after mid-2004.

"The current star combination is favorable but Saturn is currently going on the opposite direction from the sun which is a negative factor," said Jugal Kishore Grover of Saral Jyotish astrology firm in New Delhi.

"Saturn represents the masses and leaders and when it travels slow it leads to diseases and earthquakes like the one in Iran and this will taint politicians across the world."

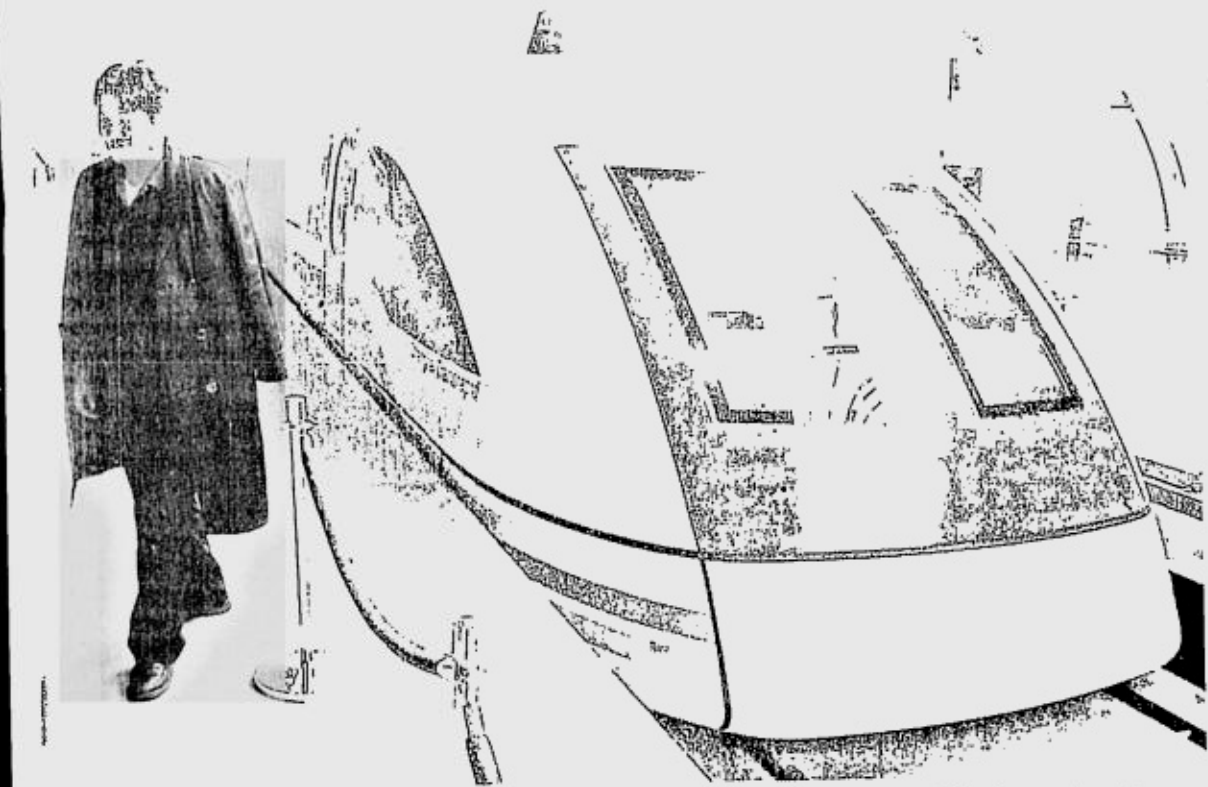
"But come March-end, fortunes will look up as Jupiter, which represents knowledge, is well placed in the path of sun and that will remain there until July and then Mercury will heap riches on our business community between August and October," he said.

The astrologer cautioned however that the period until March 7 could be filled with worries for India and the world. "Saturn delays but does not deny," he added.

Like Grover, China's Song fears major disasters in the year ahead.

"I predict a big fire disaster in 2004," he said, but, like Hong Kong's Ma, does not see a return of the deadly SARS virus that rattled the world in 2003.

"SARS will not come back," he said. **AFP**



A PASSENGER walks near the world's first magnetic levitation train for commercial use, the Maglev, on Jan. 1 in Shanghai, China. The Maglev, which started its regular service Thursday, runs between Longyang Road Station and Pudong International Airport at a speed of 430 km an hour for about 7 minutes 20 seconds. **AP**

Shanghai maglev train begins regular runs

BEIJING—Sleek, silvery and ready to fly, Shanghai's 430-kph magnetic-levitation train began its daily commercial operation Thursday, shooting out of its station amid high hopes for better—and much more expensive—commuting.

The opening came a year and a day after German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder visited Shanghai for the maiden voyage of the German-built project.

The first train Thursday pulled out at 8:32 a.m. from Longyang Station with 10 passengers aboard for the 7-minute,

20-second whoosh of a journey—30 km to Pudong International Airport.

The price of an economy seat is about \$9, and VIP seats cost about \$18. Trains will run every 20 minutes daily.

Security guards stood by at the entrance. Passengers were required to go through airport-style security to board. Digital signs monitored the speed for passengers.

Based on German technology, the \$1.2-billion train connects Shanghai to its 3-year-old airport, the city's second.

The system underwent nearly a year of testing since it made an inaugural experimental run on Dec. 31, 2002, carrying Schroeder and former Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji. More than 200,000 people have ridden the train in weekend test runs since then.

German companies spent decades and billions of dollars developing maglev technology, but had searched in vain for a customer until Shanghai leaders picked the system as a way to highlight the city's high-tech ambitions. **AP**

Police dismiss Michael Jackson's abuse claims

SANTA BARBARA, Calif.—The Santa Barbara County Sheriff on Wednesday dismissed claims by Michael Jackson that he was roughed up by deputies during his arrest on child molestation charges and threatened to charge the pop star with making a false police report.

Sheriff Jim Anderson, speaking to reporters at a news conference to rebut Jackson's claims, also showed a videotape of the 45-year-old entertainer being taken into custody inside an airport hanger and excerpts of an audiotape made during his subsequent ride to a police station.

On the audiotape Jackson initially tells deputies that his handcuffs were "a little tight," but later assures them that he is "wonder-

ful, thank you" and can be heard whistling, singing and humming during the ride.

The deputies can be heard asking Jackson several times if he was comfortable and advising the one-time "King of Pop" how to sit in the car seat to avoid discomfort from the handcuffs.

The videotape shows Jackson stepping off his private plane with attorney Mark Geragos and having a discussion with authorities before he is placed into the car.

"Michael Jackson was treated with the utmost respect and courtesy during his arrest, transport and booking and release by all members of the department," Anderson said. "He was in no way manhandled or abused."

He later added: "I think Mr. Jackson has seriously hurt his credibility."

Anderson said that on the tape Jackson can be heard as he leaves the jail thanking one of the detectives who escorted him there and can be seen waving to the crowd with the arm that he said was injured.

"I am accepting the extremely serious allegations made by Mr. Jackson as a formal citizen complaint against members of the Santa Barbara's sheriff's department," Anderson said, adding that he had asked for the complaint to be "thoroughly and completely" investigated by the state attorney general.

California Attorney General Bill Lockyer said that at Anderson's request, he had asked investigators from his office to look into the Jackson arrest and whether the entertainer's civil rights had been violated. **Reuters**



MICHAEL Jackson displays his right arm in this undated photo released by the office of attorney Mark Geragos. Jackson said on Dec. 28 that he was bruised and his shoulder dislocated because of jailers' rough treatment. **AP**

Israeli dog joins up with Palestinians

JERUSALEM—An Israeli army Alsatian trained for fighting was shot dead during an operation in the West Bank city of Nablus after turning on one of the soldiers, the Maariv daily reported Thursday.

During clashes with Palestinian militants Wednesday in the narrow streets of the Old City, the German shepherd named Bo suddenly attacked and bit one of the Israeli paratroopers, the newspaper said.

The soldier shot the dog in the leg but Bo charged a second time and was eventually shot dead by another soldier. **AFP**



KOIZUMI (left) is led by a Shinto priest during a visit to the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo honoring Japan's war dead on Jan. 1. REUTERS

Koizumi visits controversial shrine again, draws swift rebuke from China

TOKYO—Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi started the new year by visiting a shrine honoring Japan's war dead Thursday—a decision that brought a swift rebuke from China and could provoke an outcry over Tokyo's largest planned deployment of troops abroad since World War II.

Koizumi's annual visits to Tokyo's Yasukuni Shrine, often criticized as a tribute to Japan's militaristic past, outrage countries in Asia that Japan invaded and brutally occupied last century.

This year's visit comes at a particularly touchy time as Japan embarks on a sensitive mission to send military personnel to assist humanitarian efforts in the US-led reconstruction of Iraq. The visit also tests Japan's relations with other countries, including China and

South Korea, amid an ongoing diplomatic drive to prod North Korea to end an impasse over its nuclear programs.

Koizumi arrived amid a throng of New Year's revelers. Dressed in the long robe and pleated trousers of a traditional, formal Japanese costume, Koizumi climbed the steps of Yasukuni shrine led by a white-robed Shinto priest.

Koizumi, who is known for hawkish views and his support of policy to bolster Japan's military, said he had decided on the visit to pray for peace.

"I went with various feelings, including wishes for Japan's peace and prosperity," Koizumi told reporters after his visit. "Japan does not rest solely upon the efforts of people living now... Japan stands upon the sacrifices of others in the past."

Yasukuni shrine honors about 2.5

million Japanese war dead, including executed criminals such as war-era Prime Minister Hideki Tojo. It was Koizumi's fourth visit there since he became prime minister in April 2001, and his first since January last year.

China expressed strong dissatisfaction over the visit almost immediately.

Huang Xingyuan, spokesperson for the Chinese Embassy in Tokyo, urged Japan "to stop further activities harming the feeling of the Chinese people and Sino-Japanese relations," the official Xinhua News Agency said.

The surprise visit on New Year's Day was widely viewed as an appeal to conservative sentiment at a time when Koizumi finds himself before a public deeply divided about the military dispatch to Iraq, and battered by

criticism that he is rashly placing Japanese lives at risk.

"This trip was directed domestically," said Hitoshi Abe, professor of political science at Housou University near Tokyo. "Shrine visits are a Japanese tradition. Koizumi is appealing to those sentiments. If you think about the timing, it comes right before the troops go to Iraq. I think it was calculated."

Though countries in Asia have not loudly protested Japan's decision to send its military to help with reconstruction in Iraq, the timing of this year's visit could be seen by other nations as part of a broader plan to remilitarize. Tokyo plans to send about 1,000 non-combat military personnel to Iraq to repair war-shattered infrastructure in southern Iraq shortly. AP

UK spy chiefs feared US would invade Saudi Arabia, Kuwait in 1973

LONDON—British spy chiefs secretly warned that the United States would be prepared to invade Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to seize their oilfields following the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, it was disclosed Thursday.

Files released to the British National Archives under the 30-year rule for classified documents show the intelligence agencies believed the US was ready to take military action to prevent further disruption to oil supplies.

It followed the decision in October 1973 by the Arab nations to slash oil production, and send prices rocketing, while imposing a complete embargo on the Americans over their support for Israel.

In Britain, Prime Minister Edward Heath's Conservative government, which adopted a more pro-Arab line, was forced to draw up plans for gasoline rationing after panic buying led to shortages at filling stations.

Although the war in the Middle East was over after three weeks, a secret assessment drawn up for government ministers by the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC)—including the heads of MI5 and MI6—concluded the US would rather risk military action than be held to ransom again by the Arabs.

The report, dated Dec. 12, 1973 and marked "UK Eyes Alpha," described the seizure of the oil-producing areas in the region as "the possibility uppermost in American thinking."

The JIC calculated the US could guarantee sufficient oil supplies for themselves and their allies by taking the oilfields in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the Gulf state of Abu Dhabi, with total reserves of more than 28 billion tons.

It warned the American occupa-

tion would need to last 10 years, as the West developed alternative energy sources, and would result in the "total alienation" of the Arabs and much of the rest of the Third World, as well as "domestic dissension" in the United States.

However, it said the Republican administration of President Richard Nixon could be prepared to take the risks, if it was faced with the "dark scenario" of renewed Arab-Israeli conflict and further protracted oil restrictions.

It said that the United States would even consider preemptive action if Arab governments, "elated by the success of the oil weapon," began imposing new demands.

"Even if this had not happened, the US government might consider that it could not tolerate a situation in which the US and its allies were in effect at the mercy of a small group of unreasonable countries," it said.

"In view of the incalculable consequences of military action against the Arabs, we consider that US intervention would probably come late as a move of last resort," it said.

"But we cannot rule out the possibility of a rather earlier intervention," it added.

The JIC said that the initial US invasion force would not have to be large, with two brigades to seize the Saudi oilfields and one brigade each to take Kuwait and Abu Dhabi.

In order to maintain the element of surprise, the Americans' first choice would probably be an airborne assault, but if that proved impracticable they could send an amphibious task force.

"For Saudi Arabia, the operation could be fairly straightforward. The peacetime garrison of Dhahran is one lightly armed National Guard battalion and a Hawk SAM battery," it said. AFP

WILL YOUR VOTE BE COUNTED?

THE LIES AND TRUTHS ABOUT COMELEC'S AWARD TO MEGA PACIFIC eSOLUTIONS, INC.

1. LIE: The P1.3 Billion Contract to supply the Automated Counting Machines valued at P1.3 Billion was awarded to the winning bidder Mega Pacific Consortium, consisting of Mega Pacific eSolutions, Inc., SK C&C Co. Ltd., ePLDT, Inc., WeSolve Open Computing, Inc. and Election.Com Ltd.

TRUTH: The P1.3 Billion Contract was NOT Awarded to Mega Pacific Consortium, but solely to Mega Pacific eSolutions, Inc., as per documents submitted to the Supreme Court.*

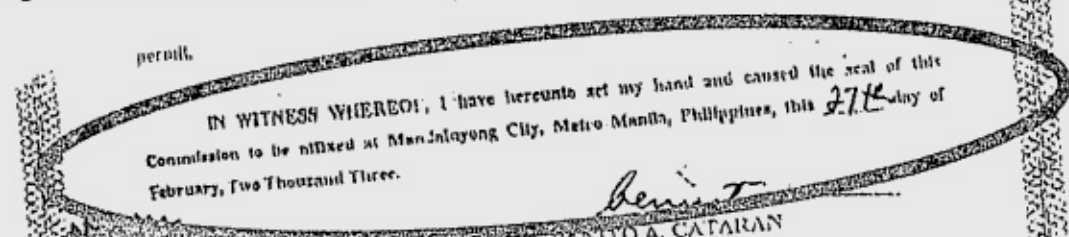
TRUTH: SK C&C, Ltd., ePLDT, Inc., WeSolve Open Pacific Computing, Inc. and Election.Com Ltd. are not consortium members, but merely suppliers of either software services and products or hardware requirements of Mega Pacific eSolutions, Inc.*

TRUTH: Election.Com Ltd. and ePLDT Inc. are mere "subcontractors" of Mega Pacific eSolutions based on the records submitted by Mega Pacific eSolutions itself to the Supreme Court.*

2. LIE: Mega Pacific eSolutions is qualified to bid and be awarded the P1.3 Billion Contract by the Comelec.

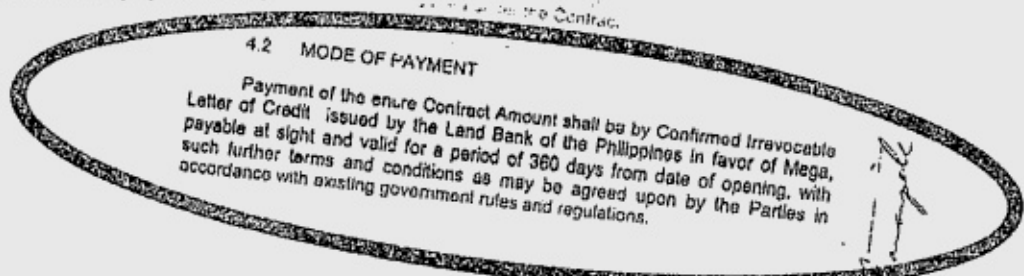
TRUTH: Comelec's Bidding rules required that corporate bidders should have been in existence for at least THREE (3) YEARS, and if not, the manufacturer should have dealt in said goods for at least FIVE (5) YEARS.

Mega Pacific eSolutions, Inc. was incorporated only on February 27, 2003 as per records of the Securities and Exchange Commission, eleven (11) days before the bidding on March 10, 2003.*



3. LIE: Payment will be made by Comelec to Mega Pacific Consortium only upon acceptance of the counting machines.

TRUTH: Paragraph 4.2 of the Contract provides "Payment of the entire Contract Amount shall be by Confirmed Irrevocable Letter of Credit issued by the Land Bank of the Philippines in favor of Mega Pacific eSolutions, Inc., payable at sight..."



4. LIE: Complainants represent the company that lost the bid and have vested interests.

TRUTH: Not one of the signatories in the petition for a TRO now pending at the Supreme Court represents the company that lost the bid. There were only two bidders—Mega Pacific eSolutions, Inc. and Total Information System, Inc. (TIM). (While there were 57 international and local election system providers who bought copies of the bid specs, the arbitrary Comelec bid specifications could have driven away better and less expensive election system vendors.)

5. LIE: The Mega Pacific Automated Counting Machines (ACM) are stand-alone...

TRUTH: If the Automated Counting Machines (ACM) are connected to another machine or a network of machines... directly or via communication lines, Internet, Wi-Fi, or any other communications facility, then they are NOT stand-alone and are therefore vulnerable to manipulation from a remote site.

If they cannot conduct an HONEST bidding process, can we trust them to conduct an HONEST election process?

"He who casts the vote decides nothing. But he who counts the votes decides everything." (Josef Stalin)

* Copies of the documents may also be secured from the Pastelero Law Office, 1503 B, Phil. Stock Exchange Center, Exchange Road, Pasig City. Tel. No. 6346486 to 89

This is a Paid Advertisement

Bomb explodes at music concert in Aceh; 9 killed

BANDA ACEH, Indonesia—Nine people were killed and 32 injured after a powerful bomb ripped through a New Year's Eve music concert in Indonesia's strife-torn Aceh province, the military said Thursday.

The powerful bomb devastated the stage where the concert was being held at Peureulak in East Aceh, military spokesperson Lt. Col. Ahmad Yani Basuki said.

A 1-year-old baby girl and a 7-year-old boy were among the dead, Basuki said, immediately blaming the attack on rebels of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), which has been fighting for independence since 1976.

"The explosion took place at 10:20 p.m. It was very powerful," Basuki said. He said most of the dead victims were teenagers.

A witness at the scene, who gave his name as Ahmad, said the stage erected on a football field was badly damaged and musical instruments blown apart.

"After several songs, suddenly there was a loud bang. People panicked and ran," he said.

A local rebel commander, Ishak Daud, denied GAM was behind the attack.

"We have never targeted civilians because they are our people," Daud said.

"The show was organized by the military and it was they who lured people to frolic. The military must be responsible for the

death of civilians," he said.

A police officer in Langsa, the main town in East Aceh, said a hunt was underway for rebels believed to have carried out the attack.

"This attack is senseless. There's no question that this was carried out by GAM," he said.

Also on Wednesday, soldiers killed three rebels in separate clashes, Basuki said. Troops seized a Kalashnikov rifle, scores of rounds of ammunition and other rebel equipment, he said.

Aceh, which is rich in natural resources, has suffered under a decades-old conflict that included a brutal 10-year crackdown launched by former Indonesian President Suharto in 1989.

Suharto's resignation in 1998 paved the way toward moves for greater autonomy for the province, and hopes of a lasting peace were raised by the signing of a pact in Geneva in December 2002.

The pact soon ran into trouble, however, with Jakarta placing under martial law on May 19 last year and launching an all-out military offensive to crush the separatist movement.

The military says 2,000 suspected rebels have been arrested or surrendered during the campaign and some 1,200 have been killed.

Some analysts question whether the toll for rebel dead also includes civilians, pointing out that relatively few weapons have been captured. AFP

talk of the town®



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Cannibal revolution

IT is easy to see the INQUIRER special report series by Juan V. Sarmiento on the bloody purges of the Communist Party in the 1980s as another case of the revolution devouring its own children. This is a deterministic view. The polarization that happened then, fostered on the one hand by a newly restored democratic government that sought to reassert democracy and turn back the gains of the communist insurgency by a military push, and on the other, by a communist movement that was trying to recover lost ground after missing the boat at the Edsa Revolution, appeared to have spawned a paranoia in the underground leadership that unleashed the wave of purges that continued even to the '90s.

The paranoia in fact might have been germane to the communist revolution that is a utopian enterprise. The bright dream of utopia seems to breed the utter nightmare of paranoia. Rabid idealism instills the manic fear that the movement is being undermined from within. Castles in the air become terrifying specters in the heavens.

But as we've said, this is a deterministic, even benign view. It basically absolves the communist leadership of culpability. It's like the temporary-insanity defense.

Despite upholding an ideology that purports to explain the world in a materialist and scientific fashion, the communist leadership has not come up with anything remotely scientific to explain the bloody purges. It has basically responded to the issue either with silence or denial, either way a most unclinical, unscientific approach.

Ah, but it has acted quite scientifically and deliberately in pinning the blame on others. In what should be a classic case of spinmeistering, aboveground organizations connected with the communist movement launched a campaign at the height of the purges to press the government to release information about the so-called "desaparecidos"—leftist activists who had suddenly disappeared from public view allegedly because of military and police illegal detention or summary execution. But as the INQUIRER special series shows, the campaign merely led kin of the victims on a wild goose chase, and camouflaged the truth about the disappearances: the widening killing fields of communist purges.

The spin-doctoring continues up to now. Even in Dutch-sponsored forums on human rights in Manila, open and intelligent discussion about the purges is anathema. Communist groups have been quick to brand such discussions as reactionary, as anti-revolutionary discourses. They will brook no criticism, much less an honest, intelligent discussion. All pretensions at dialectics and science are thrown to the wind.

But the bloody purges cannot be dismissed. The huge number of killing fields and the high number of those missing are not statistics that can easily be manipulated or wished away. In the end, they ought to be confronted by the communist leadership.

The continued silence, evasion and worse, disinformation and revisionism by the communist bosses will merely mean two things: first, that purges and executions are the way of life in a movement that purports to be enlightened and "scientific"; and second, that the communist-owned executions of former members who chose the option of peace—such as Romulo Kintanar, Popoy Lagman and Hector Mabilangan—had been prefigured early on by the arbitrary killings of cadres and other members whose only sin was to invite the merest suspicion about their loyalty. Indeed, the revolution devours its own children.

Leftist fascism

HOW do victims of the communist purges get justice? Against the oft-repeated claim of communist bosses that human-rights violations are inherently state commissions and are therefore, not to be blamed on state enemies, there has emerged the belief that non-state armed groups should be made equally culpable for violence. For instance, Soliman Santos, director for Asia of Geneva Call, said that the purges were yet another argument that "non-state actors" should be made accountable for their abuses.

If the NPA, the CPP and the NDF insist on being treated as an equal of the Philippine government, in fact as the "other" government with powers to exact taxes and tariffs (they're insisting on collecting "permit-to-campaign" fees from candidates in the 2004 election), then they should submit themselves as well to the investigation and prosecution of their alleged abuses and excesses. Their refusal to do so would only mean one thing: that their vision of egalitarianism and communism is something exclusive to their self-interest, and not inherent to the rest of humanity.



Is Roco scraping the bottom of the barrel?

TRUTH to tell, former Sen. Raul Roco is probably the best prepared among the presidential candidates. He certainly has the experience, the education—and probably the know-how, if not the temperament, for the job. Furthermore, he rates high in the poll surveys, being the earliest bird among the contenders. Unfortunately, he can't seem to get the right candidates for his ticket. The names announced for his senatorial ticket gives the impression that he is already scraping the bottom of the barrel. But what is this, his choice for vice-presidential running mate looks like he has punched a hole in the bottom and is reaching below it. Makes people wonder if Roco is serious about his ticket.

His candidate for vice president is former Rep. Hermie Aquino. Who he? Outside of his home province of Tarlac, who knows him? His only claim to limited fame is that he is a distant relative of Ninoy Aquino. But experience has shown that intelligence is not transferable to blood relatives. Look at Sen. Tessie Aquino-Oreta, Congressmen Butz and Noyonoy Aquino, and Kris Aquino, siblings and children of Ninoy.

The impression is that Roco can't find anybody else. In fact, Hermie Aquino himself said he was surprised that he was chosen, and that he was only forced to accept the draft.

Senate President Franklin Drilon said it could mean Roco is still looking for a running mate, that Aquino would be replaced if he finds the right one. In short, Aquino is just a "pamasak butas," a temporary candidate who can be replaced any time. Under our election laws, do you know that up to the eve of the election itself, a political party can change its candidates?

But why can't he find credible candidates when there are so many who have formally declared that they are running for the vice-presidency? There are, for example, Chair Bayani Fernando of the Metro Manila Development Authority, Sen. Robert Barbers, and Senate President Drilon, among others. They're certainly more credible VP candidates than Aquino. Why not them? A different party affili-

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz



ation has never prevented politicians from jumping from one political party to another.

The answer can only be that these others believe that the coalition of three skeleton political parties to which Roco belongs doesn't have a chance in this year's elections. After all, they are political parties in name only. Aside from the few leaders, these parties have practically no members. They're only a little better than the late Sen. Lorenzo Tañada's Citizen's Party which, according to a joke, has only one member: Tañada.

So why are Aquino and his senatorial team mates running? Because of a flaw in the human mind: every candidate believes, or hopes, he can win even if common sense shows that he can't. Hope springs eternal. Even those weirdos who filed certificates of candidacy for president believe they can win. If they believe they have no chance, they wouldn't bother to run, 'di ba? Why waste time and money for a hopeless candidacy? Unless they are running, according to a standard joke, "for the fund of it." Or unless they want their two minutes of publicity which a flippant media readily give them.

But Roco is rating high in the surveys. That means he can win. True—and he should win if qualification is the only basis. But being popular in the surveys and translating that popularity to actual votes cast and counted for a candidate are two different things. A candidate needs money, plenty of it, and a political machinery to take voters to the precincts, to persuade voters to vote for the candidate and to provide watchers to see to it that he is not cheated. Does Roco have enough of them?

Furthermore, Roco's vice-presidential and senatorial ticket will weigh him down. The ticket is supposed to help every member win votes. But while Roco may win votes for his ticket, the ticket itself will take away votes from him. In the first place, his choices have disappointed many supporters. They expected more credible candidates. Instead, they immediately projected the image of a "weak" ticket.

Sayang, Roco, as I see it, would make a good president *sana*. But his team mates are jeopardizing his chances for the job.

Post script to the New Year's Eve mayhem: Do you know that tens of millions of pesos worth of pyrotechnic devices exploded last New Year's Eve were not made in the Philippines at all but in China? The side-walks of Metro Manila and environs were overflowing with "Made in China" firecrackers and other pyrotechnics. And Filipinos snapped them up because they're not only cheaper, they're also better made, beautifully packed and, most important, safer.

Which brings us to these questions: Do they conform to our regulations on the size and safety of pyrotechnics? Did our government even bother to check them? Did these imports pay the correct customs duties?

If the Bulacan firecracker manufacturers are smart, they would study the imported Chinese pyrotechnics and make comparatively safer and more attractive products. The government should encourage them to do that. Our manufacturing methods are very, very primitive. If they don't improve, the imports will put them out of business.

TODAY'S JOKE:

Holdup man to victim: This is a holdup! Give me your money!

Victim: You're making a big mistake. I'm a congressman.

Holdup man: In that case, give me back my money!

Again, unity

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros



why I've taken notice of it. What has drawn my attention to it are several contentions there that I myself have heard at various gatherings over the last couple of weeks.

The first is that FPJ is surrounded by people who will manipulate him. That is a premise that has produced vastly different conclusions, though I must confess this is the first time I've heard the one the ad makes. It is original in that respect, though originality does not necessarily make for virtue. If FPJ will just be used by others, why should anyone want him to run at all, even as vice president? A vice president commands power in his own right, and as shown by GMA, can succeed a president if something happens to him. And as shown further by GMA, can mess up a country if he, or she, has the wrong agenda. If FPJ will just be used by others, you'll just want him to stick to acting.

What most others think though is that although FPJ will be prey to the schemes of others, he will remain his own man. This is apparently so because he has a good learning curve. What can I say? I didn't know the presidency admitted on-the-job training. I am tempted to say FPJ himself will not hire a neophyte in his movies in the hope the fellow will learn acting while at it, but he probably does, to go by the quality of his movies. But if you won't do that for other professions, why on earth will you do that for the presidency?

The second point is that FPJ is not a traditional politician. That was how Fidel Ramos advertised himself the first time he ran, he wasn't a *trapo* because he hadn't run for a position before. That is pure semantics. You can't be any kind of politician, traditional or mod-

ern, if you haven't been a politician to begin with. All that's saying is that ignorance is bliss. The point is having held elective office without having fallen prey to corruption and wheel-dealing. That is what a non-traditional politician means. A first-time candidate is not a *trapo* only in the sense that a singing contestant in a noontime show is not a prima donna opera diva.

The last, and most important, point is that FPJ can unify the nation. That I've heard repeatedly not just from Edgardo Angara and company but from common folk as well. The proposition simply rests on the equation that popularity equals unity, or, more aptly, that box office equals unity. In fact FPJ is no more "a man of the masses" than Clint Eastwood is a man of the masses, or, closer to home, than Erap was a man of the masses. They are all actors whose movies are patronized by the masses. He no more has "the goodwill of the people" than Michael Jordan has the goodwill of the people: It mistakes fan adulation for political approval.

What unites people is not individual charisma, it is shared dreams. The couple of times Filipinos showed exceptional unity over the last 20 years they were not led by charismatic figures. Cory was not exceptionally charismatic notwithstanding that was the way the foreign press depicted her, foreign reporters laboring from stereotypes about Oriental behavior. And GMA was not only not charismatic, she was a disincentive to rising up against a tyranny. In fact the latter uprising was against someone who had been exceptionally charismatic—FPJ's bosom friend and *kumapare*, Joseph Estrada. But the people did come together at Edsa I because Cory's grief and quest for justice were their own. And they came together at Edsa II because their hope that things could be better compelled them to.

People who flock to movie houses do not unite behind a movie, they patronize it. People who gather around a dream, they're the ones who unite. With or without a charismatic leader.

The good news and the bad

COMMENTARY

John J. Carroll, S.J.
Institute on Church and Social Issues

THE GOOD news is that the year 2003 has ended. It has been one of bloody and senseless killing in the Middle East, terrorism and threats of terrorism world-wide, kidnapping and hostage-taking and the attempted impeachment of the Chief Justice here at home, all climaxed by disastrous mudslides in Leyte and the scarcely imaginable devastation and death-toll of the earthquake in Iran. We have reason to celebrate its passing.

The bad news is that the coming year hardly promises to be better. Natural calamities are somewhat unpredictable. But election fever is building up in the Philippines, and election fever added to war fever in the United States. Thus, it is hard not to foresee man-made calamities in the form of violence, terrorism, a massive wastage of resources which should go to relieving misery around the world, and an increase of insurgency and counter-insurgency here in our country.

This is a challenge to our faith and to our hope. Looking at the pictures of a whole city wiped out in Iran, and simple farmer-families buried under mud in Leyte, as well as endemic and dehumanizing misery in forgotten places such as the southern Sudan, one is tempted to ask whether God is asleep. Are these places truly "God-forsaken"? It gives one pause.

A partial answer to the question was given me years ago, in Rome, by a television-journalist. A tough little lady, who had covered wars and natural disasters in Africa and the seething violence of the Middle East, she told me that the previous Christmas had been the "saddest but most meaningful Christmas" of her life.

How so? There had been an earthquake in the mountains of southern Italy just before Christmas. Under the impact of the quake the houses of small farmers, built of stones from the fields, collapsed and some 2,000 people died pinned under the rubble. Roads were destroyed and help slow in coming; it was raining and snowing and the living huddled miserably in the cold. My friend

somehow got there with her cameraman; and saw enough to characterize it as the saddest Christmas of her life.

But on Christmas Eve, walking up the street of a stricken village, they noticed something unusual ahead of them, a sort of procession. As they approached they saw that the people were carrying out their own version of what we call the "Panuluyan." A girl was dressed as Mary, with child, a boy as Joseph; they came up the road, begging for a room for the night. The cameraman told here, "I can't focus; my eyes are full of tears." And my friend realized that these Italian peasants, many of themselves homeless, widows and orphans, were telling her something very important, very profound. Christ did not come like a magician with a magic wand, to make our problems disappear. He came to share them, as our companion on the rough road of life, and by remaining faithful to the Father finally to triumph over them. He comes inviting each person to bear with our sufferings, to walk the rough road with Him, and so to share in His victory. The most meaningful Christmas of her life.

But why suffering at all, especially the suffering of innocent children? Why does God allow it? Here the mystery deepens, and I personally felt it most strongly when I viewed the bloated and blackened bodies of children pulled from under the July 2000 trash-fall at Payatas. But even so we can see some glimmers of light through the darkness. For God has given us intelligence precisely in order that we can build a world in which such tragedies do not happen. If someone cared enough, engineers could have calculated the risk

of the trash-fall, and society itself would have made sure that no Filipino would have to live and work in the filth and squalor of the dump. But decisions are controlled too much by the market and considerations of power and too little by real human concern.

Similarly, viewing the devastation wreaked by the earthquake in Iran, I felt sad that the vast amounts of money and talent spent on the effort to explore for life on Mars had not been devoted to earthquake research. The problem then is not with God Who has given us the intelligence to mitigate human suffering, but with us who have misused that precious gift.

A second glimmer of light in the darkness of the mystery of suffering is that a world without suffering would be a world without compassion, and compassion is surely one of the noblest human sentiments. I think here of the individuals, some of whose names are unknown to this day, who could have escaped from the trash-fall at Payatas but sacrificed their lives in helping others to escape. And, less dramatically, I think of the many good friends who continue to support our work there, for malnourished children, for out-of-school youth, for couples who see the need to limit their families. And of those who work patiently for the changes in socio-economic structures which will make the obscenity of life on the dumpsite finally obsolete. Their compassion and active concern reflect those of the compassionate Christ.

Thus I suggest we face the coming year with these lines from Chesterton's "Ballad of the White Horse" ringing in our hearts:

*I tell you naught for your comfort,
Yes, naught for your desire,
Save that the night grows darker yet
And the sea rises higher.
Night shall be thrice night over you,
And heaven an iron cope.
Do you have joy without a cause,
Yes, faith without a hope?*

Shades of Sukarno and Suharto

POLITICS is full of ironies and in Indonesia, in the run-up to the all-important polls this year, nostalgia for the past—rightly or wrongly—is beginning to play an increasingly important role in the electoral equation as familiar names reappear on the political landscape.

Just six years after former President Suharto's ouster, both his daughter—Siti Hardjanti Rukmana (better known as "Tutut")—and his political party, Golkar, are in the midst of popular revivals, albeit with varying chances of success.

While Golkar will do well in the House of Representatives (MPR) elections, it is highly unlikely that the party will field a presidential candidate capable of defeating the incumbent, Megawati Sukarnoputri.

Megawati's family name remains potent despite her lackluster record in office, so much so that two of her sisters, Sukmawati and Rachmawati, have also entered the political fray as presidential candidates.

Still, the Suhartos are attempting a comeback and on Dec. 4, Tutut was nominated formally as the presidential candidate for the political party, Duty and Concern for the Nation Party (PKPB).

PKPB chair, Mr R Hartono, himself a former general and New Order cabinet minister, presided over the event that brought together a host of pre-Reformasi figures in an eerie reminder of the past.

Tutut's re-emergence into the political arena after five years in the wilderness marks a dramatic revival for the family.

The clan's lowest point was in July 2001, when Judge Syaifuddin Kartasita, presiding over the corruption case of Suharto's youngest son Tommy, was shot dead in Jakarta.

The drive-by killing outraged the entire country. At the time, it seemed incomprehensible that the Suhartos would resurface from their exclusive residences in the Jakarta suburb of Menteng. One would have thought that shame would have kept them in seclusion.

However, two-and-a-half years can make a big difference and public sentiment in Indonesia has shifted once again.

After a succession of scandals involving Megawati's family and a middling record, the gloss has come off her administration.

Indonesian political analyst M Suryodiningrat (also known as "Tmas") of Van Zorge, Heffernan and Associates, said: "When Ibu Mega first appeared on the political landscape, she presented her party, the Indonesian Democratic Party for Struggle (PDI-P), as a vehicle for the little people—Java's *wong cilik*."

"As a result, it hasn't helped her that she has been forced to raise phone, fuel and electric prices."

Tmas added: "There's a longing for the good old days; for the physical security and basic necessities of the Suharto era."

"While the elite talk about democracy, the ordinary people are forced to deal with the realities on the ground—expensive fuel and rising rice prices."

The disenchantment has even spread to Ibu Mega's core support-base on the island of Bali, many being unhappy with her seeming lack of interest in the island's tourism slump after last October's Kuta bomb blast.

Still, it is important to stress that her economic team has managed to return Indonesia to relative prosperity.

Consumption-led gross domestic product growth has reached a creditable 3.64 percent.

Foreign exchange reserves have topped US\$30.5 billion (\$52 billion) and the current account balance remains healthy at US\$4.2 billion.

Despite the decent macro-economic news, many Indonesians feel increasingly nostalgic for the certainties of the Suharto era.

A New Order skeptic like Christian marketing professional George Irwan Marantika of Jogjakarta, admitted: "A lot of people—from taxi drivers to businessmen—miss the stability of the New Order era."

"It can't be denied that Golkar had a record of stability and relatively sound economic management."

The recently-released results of a poll conducted by the Indonesian Survey Institute (LSI) reinforced this point.

According to the poll, about 60.3 percent of the respondents said the New Order was preferable to the present system of governance.

Interestingly, only 25.2 percent of the 2,160 polled said that the present system was an improvement over the past.

Leading Indonesian intellectual Nono Makarim was concerned about this shift in sentiment: "Indonesians have forgotten the bad things from the past: the corruption, the violation of human rights, the closing down of the mass media and the extra-judicial killings."

"Many people now overlook the way the Suharto family behaved—at the time they were enormously greedy."

Indonesian photographer and non-governmental organization activist Rio Helmi was more scathing: "It is misinformed nostalgia. Anyone who is in the know, understands that such views are nonsense."

"But frankly, the New Order types never went away. They still have a lot of the money and power."

Nostalgia will be an important factor in the coming presidential elections.

And Golkar—Pak Harto's electoral vehicle—looks set to capitalize on the national mood.

To add to this, the LSI poll also revealed that 30.1 percent of those disappointed with the current administration wanted Golkar to lead the next government.

Recognizing Golkar's appeal, even Tutut has tried to associate her fledgling party with the old stalwart's appeal.

However, Tmas dismissed Tutut's candidacy: "She's not a real contender."

"Her party is small and ineffectual. It doesn't have the mechanism on the ground. She's driven by the need to redeem her father's name."

In the presidential contest, the candidate to beat remains Ibu Mega—the middle-aged housewife from Jakarta.

However, Tmas conceded Golkar's continuing popular allure: "Many people are disappointed with Ibu Mega and for those of us who don't feel comfortable with the avowedly Islamic parties, Golkar is the only real alternative."

"The party also retains a strong nationwide network. It's well placed for the MPR elections in April, because the electoral system favors parties with a reach beyond Java."

Nostalgia may well lead to a Golkar triumph in the MPR polls.

However, Megawati's phenomenal name recognition across the 230-million strong archipelagic nation means she is the front-runner for the presidential polls.

No one, not even a Suharto, will be able to beat her.

EYE ON ASIA

Karim Raslan



When mothers become criminals

"CRIMINALIZING Motherhood" is how Silja J.A. Talvi, writing for The Nation, titled her piece on the case of a woman in South Carolina who is serving 12 years in prison for the "crime" of giving birth to a stillborn child.

Writes Talvi: "As Regina McKnight grieved and held her third daughter Mercedes' lifeless body, she could never have imagined that she was about to become the first woman in America convicted for murder by using cocaine while pregnant."

McKnight's plight is instructive not just to American women, but to women all over the world, especially here in the Philippines where incumbent officials—and other aspirants for public office—seem all too willing to barter women's rights for the electoral support of the Catholic hierarchy and other conservative elements.

What will happen when motherhood becomes, as a matter of law, and policy, not a right and a choice but a duty and obligation? Here's McKnight's story, and what could be in store for all women under a rigid, punitive "pro-life" regime.

As Talvi recounts, McKnight was a seasonal tobacco farmworker with a tenth-grade (third year high school) education who was homeless, drug-addicted and "trying to cope with the recent loss of her mother, who was run over by a truck." She never received any help for her drug problems, not surprising considering, as Talvi points out, that South Carolina ranks lowest in the United States for spending on drug and alcohol treatment programs.

*** INTO THIS dismal picture steps former Republican Attorney General Charlie Condon, now running for the US Senate, who was determined to apply a child abuse law, the only one in the United States, that covers "viable fetuses." At least 100 women in the state have subsequently faced criminal charges for using drugs while pregnant, reports Talvi. South Carolina was also the first and only state to test pregnant women for drug use and report the findings to police without the woman's consent—or a warrant—until the US Supreme Court put a stop to it.

McKnight, now 26, is the first to be imprisoned on a murder conviction under the "viable

fetuses" law. In October, McKnight lost what Talvi calls her "best shot" at release when the Supreme Court declined to review her case, "allowing the conviction to stand by default."

"What South Carolina has done, in effect, is (to make) pregnancy a crime waiting to happen," Talvi quotes Lynn Paltrow, a lawyer and the executive director of the National Advocates for Pregnant Women in New York.

This, despite what Talvi says is the "absence of any scientific research linking cocaine use to stillbirth." Nor did it matter that the state "couldn't conclusively prove that McKnight's cocaine use actually caused Mercedes' stillbirth. What mattered in the end, says Talvi, is that 'South Carolina prosecutors were hell bent on using McKnight as an example.'"

Paltrow was one of the lawyers who took McKnight's appeal to the high tribunal, joining 27 other medical and drug-policy groups that sought to overturn the conviction, including the American Public Health Association, the American Nurses Association and the American Society of Addiction Medicine. These organizations, says Talvi, saw McKnight's case as "an extreme manifestation of an increasingly successful anti-choice agenda wrapped in the cloak of the War on Drugs."

*** ALL over the United States, approximately 275 women have already faced charges relating to drug use during their pregnancies, says Paltrow. "In a country where a pregnant woman has no legal right to safe housing, daycare, nutritious food, medical care or mental health services, it's horrifying to witness the development of a law

that allows for women's bodies to be treated as if they were mere vessels," writes Talvi.

Talvi notes that the mothers have poor chances of winning public sympathy, and that prosecutors "knew exactly how to demonize a 'drug mom.'" Judy Appel of the Drug Policy Alliance, also points out that "women who are in serious need of prenatal health care—and at most risk of having medical problems—are even more reluctant to turn to a system that might press charges if something goes wrong with their pregnancies."

The legal precedent set in the McKnight case is far graver than it might seem at first, Talvi says. "As the laws have been written in South Carolina, child abuse charges could as easily be applied to pregnant women who smoke, drink even a moderate amount of alcohol, work around certain kinds of chemicals or even change cat litter—in essence, any activity that is 'within the realm of public knowledge' of causing potential harm to a fetus."

*** MCKNIGHT'S case has since emboldened South Carolina to go after other women, even retroactively. Prosecutors are going after their second murder conviction under the "viable fetus" law, a woman by the name of Angelia Kennedy who, like McKnight, is African-American, and who allegedly smoked cocaine while pregnant, allegedly resulting in a stillbirth five years ago.

Right after the Supreme Court decision, Honolulu city prosecutors went after Tayshea Aiwohi, 31, for the death of her two-day-old son. She has been charged with manslaughter for using crystal methamphetamine or "meth" during her pregnancy. The Honolulu prosecutors deny any links to McKnight's case, but declare that would now consider prosecutions of "meth moms" and alcohol abusers, even when their babies survive.

Says Talvi: "Women like McKnight and Aiwohi are the victims of prosecutors who have decided that they have the right to judge and punish women for what happens to their bodies. It is a definitive step toward a government that would have the power to tell us what constitutes acceptable pregnancy and motherhood."

Creation story

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo



become part of Marcos lore. It was one of the most beautiful books published in those days, a permanent record of sycophancy.

In 1582 Miguel de Loarca wrote an account of his impressions of the Philippines and thus handed down to us the Philippine creation story that has since been edited and watered-down for use in our textbooks and classrooms. The complete version follows:

"[They] believe that heaven and earth had no beginning and that there were two gods, one called Captan and the other Maguayan. They believe that the land breeze and the sea breeze were married; and that the land breeze brought forth a reed, which was planted by the god Captan. When the reed grew, it broke into two sections, which became a man and a woman. To the man they gave the name Sicalac, and that is the reason why men from that time on have been called lalac; the woman they called Sicaay, and thenceforth women have been called babayes. One day the man asked the woman to marry him, for there were no other people on the world; but she refused, saying that they were brother and sister, born of the same reed, with only one knot between them; and that she would not marry him, since he was her brother. Finally, they asked advice from the tunnies [fish?] of the sea, and from the doves of the air; they also went to the earthquake, who said that it was necessary for them to marry, so that the world might be peopled.

"They married and called their first son Sibio;

then a daughter was born to them, and they gave her the name of Samar. This brother and sister also had a daughter called Lupuban. She married Pandaguan, a son of the first pair, and had a son called Anoranor. Pandaguan was the first to invent a net for fishing at sea; and, the first time when he used it, he caught a shark and brought it on shore, thinking that it would not die. But the shark died when brought ashore; and Pandaguan, when he saw this, began to mourn and weep over it—complaining against the gods for having allowed the shark to die, when no one had died before that time. It is said that the god Captan, on hearing this, sent the flies to ascertain who the dead one was; but as the flies did not dare to go, Captan sent the weevil who brought back the news of the shark's death. The god Captan was displeased at these obsequies to a fish. He and Maguayan made a thunderbolt with which they killed Pandaguan; he remained thirty days in the infernal regions, at the end of which time the gods took pity on him, brought him back to life, and returned him to the world.

"While Pandaguan was dead, his wife Lupuban became the concubine of a man called Maracoyun; and these people say was the time concubinage began in the world. When Pandaguan returned, he did not find his wife at home, because she had been invited by her friend to feast upon a pig that he had stolen; and the natives say that this was the first theft committed in the world. Pandaguan sent his son for Lupuban, but she refused to go home, saying that the dead do not return to the world. At this answer Pandaguan became angry, and returned to the infernal regions. The people believe that, if his wife had obeyed his summons, and he had not gone back at that time, all the dead would return to life."

Reading the above makes us rethink all the stories our teachers taught us in kindergarten.

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo.edu

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False sense of security

THERE is no foolproof or crack-proof system nor will there ever be.

For IT security professionals, the current system security is only "as good as its last crack." This includes the automated counting machines (ACMs) of the Commission on Elections from MegaPac Inc. The ACMs are advertised as crack-proof with the installed 3DES encryption technology but as a newly introduced system for the coming elections, there is no prior measure of its security.

Indeed, it will take a long time (greater than the seven days targeted for the proclamation of winners) to crack such an encryption algorithm by an external intruder

but it's not protected from internal crackers who have direct access to the system. Like a house key, encryption keys are effective if only trusted people have them.

Since the source code of the application software is proprietary, the public was left without a choice but to believe the supplier on the software's credibility. The application software is the mind of the ACMs. The "dagdag-bawas scheme" could be done more freely and a lot easier. Culprits will only have to insert a few lines of conditional statements or even preload data to the system such that the desired candidate takes the greater number of votes.

With the Comelec's attempt to automate the canvassing and counting of ballots, there should always be transparency. From the bidding process of the ACMs, which are still in question, to the source code for the application software.

But the use of information technology will not solve the traditional goons, guns and gold of Philippine elections, for technology is only a tool. Whoever has the power over the technology will always use it for their advantage.

—EMIL CINCO,
member, Preparatory Committee,
Computer Professionals' Union
Advancing ICT for the People,
agham@edsamail.com.ph



Why the NCMH is a vital institution

THE OLDEST government institution seeing to the plight of the mentally ill in the country is in peril. The recent spate of protests by the health workers of the institution against the sellout and transfer of the National Center for Mental Health (NCMH) to a far-flung province, shows their alarm and concern for the welfare of the patients under their care. Add to this, the health workers fear of losing their jobs in spite of assurances of being "absorbed" by the receiving local government.

This sellout seems part of the government's privatization schemes at the expense of the people. It has only been the resistance, militancy and struggle of

the people against such moves that have thwarted these efforts since the time of former Presidents Ramos and Estrada, and now Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

For such a long time, mental health concerns have either been given low priority or no priority among the public health concerns of the Department of Health. The government does not seem to realize and accept that a mark of progress, development and prosperity, including the peace and order situation in the country, is the mental health of its people and that of its leaders.

Instead of addressing and supporting the diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of the mentally ill, the government continues to

turn its back on its duty and responsibility of providing safe, affordable, necessary and effective (SANE) health care to its people. It lacks SANE efforts of promoting mental health and preventing the occurrence of serious mental disability. Perhaps the government forgets that health is a basic human right.

As a practicing psychiatrist, I support the call to strengthen the delivery of mental health care. Retain the various services of the NCMH. Increase the budget for health. Stop this insanity!

—REYNALDO J. LESACA JR., MD,
chair, Health Alliance for
Democracy (HEAD),
233 Mayon St.,
Sta Mesa Heights, Quezon City

Libanan did not bolt NPC

THIS refers to the news item published last Nov. 24 in the Second Front page of the INQUIRER titled, "Solons bolting NPC for Lakas—GMA aide," where it was reported by Carlito Pablo that Rep. Marcelino C. Libanan of the Lone District of Eastern Samar and chair of the House Committee on Justice, is one of the congressmen belonging to the Nationalist People's Coalition (NPC) "now lining

up to join the ruling Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats."

Upon his express instructions, we would like to correct the inaccurate news item.

Libanan did not bolt the NPC to join Lakas-CMD as one of its new recruits.

—NORMAN G. TANSINGCO,
chief of staff,
Office of Rep. Marcelino C.
Libanan, Rm. 214 South Wing,

Dick Gordon's crossover options

THE WAY things are going, Tourism Secretary Dick Gordon may be preparing to jump ship from the Macapagal administration. The writing is on the wall: In a public hearing on the Subic port development project conducted by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources last Oct. 29, Gordon announced that he would oppose the SBMA project even if it would take his resignation as tourism secretary. Thereafter, he went on a vocal overdrive, pouring his venom out on the port project and its chief proponent, SBMA Chair Felicitio Payumo.

Despite the fact that the port project is an initiative of the national government under the Subic-Clark Alliance for Development, and Gordon is part of that government, President Macapagal's tourism czar refuses to toe the line and uses every opportunity to vent tirade after nauseating tirade against the port project. Gordon announced that he was not afraid to be booted out of the Cabinet for his opposition to the Subic port.

The public quickly noticed, of course. And some urged President Macapagal to fire the tourism boss

for his open defiance. But this could be what Gordon wanted all along.

Why so? The character of the political animal that sits in the tourism throne bears this out. Gordon is a shrewd politician and a large part of his political savvy stems from his natural agility to switch loyalty. Gordon started out as a Marcos boy. When the dictator hurriedly left for Hawaii, he instantly threw his allegiance to the Marcos heir-apparent, Danding Conjuangco. But when the original Boss was trounced in the 1992 elections, Olongapo's "boss" turned to Fidel V. Ramos, never mind if FVR helped bring about the fall of Ferdinand Marcos. Gordon, of course, became a pariah when Joseph Estrada's turn came, so he became part of the cabal that soon installed GMA. Now he's back in the power circle as a member of the Cabinet.

Gordon might fall from Ms Macapagal's grace because his posture on the port project gnaws at the very core of her strong republic. But this might be what Gordon wants all along. Gordon is said to be eyeing the vice-presidency, having scaled



Donations of operating room needs at PGH

I WOULD like to thank the INQUIRER for publishing my letter regarding the plight of the Philippine General Hospital (PGH) with regard to its constrained ability to deliver adequate surgical services to its patients. (PDI, 11/6/03)

Resident surgeons have had to deal with the problem of inadequate supplies of linen and gowns by sometimes shouldering the cost of purchasing these necessities out of their own pockets if the patient cannot afford it just so the operation can proceed. These products cost around P1,800 each. The government cannot expect the doctors at PGH to perpetually purchase operating room necessities by themselves; indeed, it is iniquitous to even pass the onus to us—but, sadly, this is our present and agonizing state.

The shortage of linen and gowns at the PGH is merely a symptom of a deeper fiscal crisis that besets this hospital and is a portent of a looming catastrophe we all would rather not face. The government must acknowledge the existence of this crisis that persists in the country, not just the PGH, and its responsibility to resolve it. It is scandalous that basic social services such as nutrition, health and education are marginalized to pursue other superfluous political ambitions.

In light of this dire state of affairs, donations of disposable operating room linen and gowns will be extremely appreciated. I am asking the INQUIRER's readers to contact us through dpaloyo@yahoo.com or generationcmd@yahoo.com for information on how to donate. Please help in alleviating our situation. Enable us to realize our potential to deliver quality health care to our underprivileged patients, the principal victims of our current condition.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that donations are merely a stop-gap measure to stave off an enormous health disaster. What is required is a swift but long-term solution that is responsive to the situation. We ask, among others, that the government allocate an adequate budget to the health sector and that disbursements occur appropriately. Otherwise, it will only have itself to blame when it confronts a disastrous health tragedy.

—DON R. PALOYO, M.D.,
president,
Physician's Association,
UP-Philippine General Hospital,
Taft Avenue, Manila

House of Representatives,
Batasan Hills, Quezon City

The original report of Carlito Pablo indeed did not mention that Marcelino C. Libanan was leaving the Nationalist People's Coalition to join Lakas but merely said he was one of the NPC congressmen who would support the presidential bid of President Macapagal-Arroyo. We regret the error.—The Editors

China braces for SARS reemergence

BEIJING—China has agreed to send samples from a SARS case in southern Guangzhou city to an overseas laboratory to definitively establish the status of a patient that a senior health official said is infected with the deadly virus.

Tests run in Guangdong province have shown that a 32-year-old television journalist has come down with the virus that causes Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, Feng Shaoming, spokesperson for the Guangdong health bureau said on Tuesday.

News Analysis

Robert J. Saigel

But the Ministry of Health wants to undergo further tests and has agreed to hand over samples from the patient to the World Health Organization for analysis in its international laboratories, the WHO said.

Under regulations issued earlier this year, China's ministry of health is the only official organ with the authority to announce clinically confirmed SARS cases.

In Hong Kong, Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa warned the chances of the suspected case in neighboring Guangdong being confirmed were "very high." "Before I left my office, I received a message; although the SARS case in (provincial capital) Guangzhou has not been confirmed, experts say the chance is very high," he told reporters late Tuesday.

Tung stressed both Guangdong and Hong Kong would tighten health checks at border points.

SARS triggered a worldwide health crisis after emerging in Guangdong in November last year, causing 774 deaths and more than 8,000 infections, the vast majority in Asia.

"As this is so far the first case (this winter), I think that the experts in Guangdong province must have a very deep understanding of the case," Deng Xiaohong, spokesperson for the Beijing municipal health department told AFP.

"We are waiting for an official announcement. We will believe them when they announce it officially." A joint Ministry of Health/WHO team were in Guangzhou going over test results and had met with the patient, who is said to be recovering, health ministry officials said.

Despite the lack of official confirmation, medical officials in Guangdong appeared to be viewing the case as being confirmed, but were expressing a belief that the infection and fatality rate of a new SARS outbreak may be much lower than the epidemic earlier this year.

Zhou Junan, head of the Shenzhen Health Department in Guangdong, told Wednesday's Beijing News that the suspect patient had all the classic SARS symptoms but that his capability to infect others was low and the symptoms were milder than what appeared in the earlier outbreaks last winter and spring.

"The two previous generations of the atypical pneumonia virus spread violently, the rate of infection was rather high and it led to the deaths of a lot of people infected," Zhou was quoted as saying.

"What might be happening is that the third generation of atypical pneumonia virus has a rather low rate of infectability, after the patient becomes sick his effectiveness to recover is clear, the development of the illness is moderate yet these are SARS-like symptoms, this is to say that the symptoms were like SARS." Zhou further added that other new emerging diseases also showed a similar tendency to be less viral in succeeding generations.

China was the country worst affected by the SARS epidemic, infecting 5,327 people nationwide and killing 349.

AFP

GMA shows true colors

AFTER WEEKS of vacillation between what is right and what is expedient, President Macapagal-Arroyo has shown her true colors as a person and as a leader to the Filipino. For contrary to what she herself says her conscience tells her regarding the morality of the death penalty, she goes ahead and lifts its suspension; virtually admitting that against her own moral judgment she gave in to the clamor, not of truth or of morality, but of interest groups, whose money and votes she will need to get herself elected.

What a shame, Madam President! We wonder what other major decisions she has made or will make that were and will be based not on what is right and what is good for the people, but on what she and her political advisers decide will perpetuate her in power?

The picture that comes easily to mind is that of Pilate standing between the bleeding and battered Christ, and the raving and murderous mob, screaming for the Master's death. Pilate knows that it would be totally wrong to deliver this innocent man to the vengeful hate of this crowd. But instead of doing what is just and right, and releasing an innocent man, this cowardly and opportunistic non-leader hands him over to the mob, to save his own skin. Then he washes his hands, in a lame attempt to escape responsibility.

But she is not getting off this mad decision that lightly.

We, the people, are holding her responsible for the murderous effects of her action. Lifting the suspension of the death penalty that

she considers immoral is tantamount to imposing on an already violent and wounded society the old law of the jungle ("a tooth for a tooth").

How does this promote the strong republic, and the compassionate government that she often boasts of? What she has done is to bring our nation back to the jungle. And this is where real terrorism comes from—the same terrorism that she and George W. Bush are so paranoid about. And she has planted its seeds right in our front yard.

We are 100 percent for seeking justice for the victims of all crimes. We vigorously and steadfastly struggle so that perpetrators of heinous crimes be made to pay for their crime against humanity.

But we must not do this by employing the very weapons that these madmen use to commit evil. Because when we do this, we sink to the level whence come these heinous crimes, and ourselves become evil.

For once, we ask her to set aside personal, family or political interests, and serve the people. For once, do what her humanity and her faith tells her to do: lend a hand to lead us out of this jungle into a civilized and God-fearing nation. Abolish the death penalty forever from our nation's life!

—FR. BEN MORALED, CSSR,
co-chair, Justice, Peace
and Integrity of Creation

Commission of the Association of
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Across the NATION

Assistant Editor Tony Bergonia

Court gives graft case vs Sarangani gov go signal

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—The Regional Trial Court (RTC) in Alabell town in Sarangani gave a go signal to the Ombudsman-Mindanao to continue with the hearing of the graft charges filed against the top officials of the province.

Alabell RTC Judge Jaime Infante issued the order last week lifting the temporary restraining order he earlier issued against the Ombudsman.

Sometime last month, the Ombudsman issued an order directing Gov. Miguel Escobar, Vice Gov. Felipe Constantino, several board members, department heads and capitol employees to file their counter affidavit on the graft charges filed by the anti-corruption watchdog Sarangani People's Action for Reform and Good Governance (Spare Good).

However, the respondents led by Escobar asked the court to stop the Ombudsman from hearing the graft charges filed against them.

In his order, Infante ruled that the court has no jurisdiction over the case filed by the anti-corruption group against Escobar and 28 other capitol officials and employees.

The Supreme Court issued in July this year a circular ordering regular courts to stop indiscriminately issuing TROs against the Ombudsman.

Escobar, Constantino and all members of the provincial board, except the president of the Sangguniang Kabataan, were accused of misappropriating over P51 million in government funds from January to December 2002. **Aguilera Z. Zonia, PDI Mindanao Bureau**

Landslide disaster declared over by South Leyte officials

By Jani Arnaiz
PDI Visayas Bureau

MAASIN CITY—The Southern Leyte Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council convened their last meeting on Tuesday and declared that the disaster situation was over and moved for the massive rehabilitation of areas in three towns in Southern Leyte on Panaon Island that were devastated by landslides.

"The disaster is over. We will next convene as part of Oplan Bagong Panaon," Gov. Rosette Leras told the PDCC during the meeting.

"Oplan Bagong Panaon" will be launched today with a motorcade around the city and the signing of memorandum of agreement among government agencies, local and national, NGOs and other civic groups involved in the rehabilitation of landslide stricken areas.

Leras said they decided to hold a motorcade to make the people aware that there is still an effort to help the victims of the tragedy.

The main intention of Oplan Bagong Panaon is to establish by June 30 relocation communities for victims of the landslides.

The project will have six components that include housing, social welfare, infrastructure, health and environment. Each component will be headed by different heads of department in the provincial capitol with Leras and the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) as overall overseer.

Vice Gov. Eva Tomol will head



A DOLL lies among the debris of homes and lives devastated by the landslides.

the technical working group-cum-operation center and will handle the administrative and financial management for the project.

Provincial administrator Genis Murallos and planning officer Virginia Cruz will serve as secretariat and information officer with the assistance of the Philippine Infor-

mation Agency (PIA) and the local media group organized by the Associated Media of Southern Leyte.

Initially, Oplan Bagong Panaon has already identified a relocation site in Liloan, where the landslide and floods had killed 22 persons and dislocated 93 families. The displaced families would be relocated

in Barangay San Roque of the town.

In Punta, San Francisco, where the mudslides had claimed the lives of 105 people and displaced 763 families, the victims will be relocated in Barangay Pasanon.

No relocation site has yet been identified for the victims of the landslides in Barangay Pinut-an,

San Ricardo.

The death toll of the tragedy was placed at 154, with 37 injured. At least 1,485 families were affected in 25 barangays in the entire province. So far, 918 people have remained in five evacuation centers. The total number of persons so far served by the PDCC was placed at 6,724.

Angeles City draw unmasks 'jueteng'

ANGELES CITY—The announcement of the winning number pair "9-11" on Monday's midnight jueteng draw here shattered the claim of top Philippine National Police officials that the country was completely, and finally, free of the illicit numbers game, a source from the Central Luzon police said.

Senior Supt. Jimmy Restua, city police director, however, denied reports that organized jueteng operations exist in his city, pointing out that the operations by a financier identified with a top city official had been stopped since Dec. 20.

Documents obtained from the regional police command in Camp Olivas showed Restua submitted on Dec. 21 a certification claiming 33 villages in the city had "no existing any form (sic) of illegal gambling pursuant to (Presidential Decree) 1602 particularly jueteng."

Identical certification letters by six barangay captains were attached to Restua's report.

On Tuesday night, however, Restua told the INQUIRER that a former official in Angeles City and an official in the City of San Fernando have since taken over the game in Angeles in a "guerilla" manner.

Guerrilla operations, according to him, exist also in the City of San Fernando, Pampanga's capital. **Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk**



DYNAMITE

The word emblazoned on the shirt of this boy describes aptly what the child went through in his effort to have fun on New Year's Day. The boy is among dozens treated for minor injuries from firecracker explosions.

RAY ZAMBRANO PDI PHOTO

Gunmen believed to be NPAs kill Army corporal, son in Bohol town

By Joey A. Gabieta and Chito A. Fuentes
PDI Visayas Bureau

TACLOBAN CITY—A member of the Philippine Army and his son were killed by still undetermined number of armed men believed to be members of the New People's Army on New Year's Eve in Sta. Rita, Samar.

A father and his young son from Inabanga, Bohol were also among six persons killed in various areas in the Visayas on the eve of the New Year in incidents that police said were not related to the revelry to greet 2004.

Cpl Alfredo Monutcho Sr., 47, was shot repeatedly by his assailants just outside his home in Barangay Tominamos, Sta. Rita shortly before 11 p.m. on Wednesday.

Monutcho Sr., who belonged to the 52nd Infantry Battalion based in Barangay San Eduardo, Sta. Rita, Samar, 28 km from Tacloban City, was outside his house with his family getting ready to celebrate the New Year.

His son, Alfredo Jr., 25, was wounded as he tried to shield his father from the assailants.

He died while being transported to the Eastern Visayas Regional Medical Center (EVRMC) for medical treatment.

Monutcho's daughter, Rebecca, 23, was also injured. She was brought to a local hospital for treatment of bullet wounds she suffered in different parts of the body.

Allan Matillano, regional information officer of the Philippine National Police in Eastern Visayas, said the report they received showed that Monutcho managed to fire back but there was no report if he injured any of his assailants.

In Bohol, a motorcycle-for-hire driver and his four-year-old son did not live to see the day in 2004 when a gunman shot and killed them at midnight of Dec. 31 in Barangay Nabuad, Inabanga town, about 75 km from Tagbilaran City.

Doroteo Pacaldo, 46, and his son Jambi both died of gunshot wounds in different parts of the bodies after they were shot about 11:45 p.m. Wednesday. **With a report from Carla P. Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau**

Ex-Bicol NPA chief files bid for gov

TABACO CITY—Former New People's Army (NPA) Bicol commander Sotero "Ka Teroy and Ka Nognog" Llamas filed his certificate of candidacy (CoC) for governor, before the Commission on Elections Albay provincial office on the same day Sen. Panfilo Lacson filed his CoC as Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino's candidate for president.

Llamas, 52, who had served as a rebel leader for 33 years, is running for governor of Albay under LDP-Lacson wing.

He said his decision to join the election is part of his revolutionary career.

"This is a form of my parliamentary struggle which will awaken the government to give enough attention to our group," he said.

A high school valedictorian, Ka Teroy or Sol as he is fondly called by his immediate family mem-

bers, entered into the underground movement in 1970 as student mass movement leader.

He went uphill and joined the armed NPA when then President Marcos lifted the writ of habeas corpus.

He became the party secretary of the Communist Party of the Philippines-NPA in Albay in 1972-1973.

He was again back in Bicol in 1992-1995 after his various top posts until he was caught in an encounter on May 19, 1995 in a hilly village in Juban, Sorsogon.

He suffered a gunshot wound in the chest and in the stomach.

He was imprisoned for more than a year but was released on June 21, 1996. **Job Belen, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau**

Chicken glut brings down prices, woes to poultry industry

By Yolanda Sotelo-Fuentes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

SAN FABIAN, Pangasinan—If you find dressed chicken suddenly expensive or worse, missing from market stalls or grocery freezers, blame it on the production glut in early 2003.

An owner of a chicken dressing plant here said because of oversupply, the cost of chicken meat dropped, forcing poultry industry players who were losing money to downsize their production in the second quarter of last year.

The result? Lack of supply at a time when the demand is greatest and high prices during the Christmas and New Year holidays.

Benjamin Lolim, owner of the LDP Farm Food Corp., said that in the second quarter of 2003, the farm gate price of a chicken was between P38 and P40 a kilogram, which is below the production cost of P40 to P45 a kg.

In December, dressed chicken was sold at a farm gate price of P67 a kg, but its prices went up to between P100 and P112 a kg in the market.

Lolim, who also owns poultry farms in Mampandan town, said since almost all of the poultry companies scaled down their production, the supply could not cope with demand during the holidays.

He said fast food chains, whose main fare is fried chicken, do not run out of supply because "poultry raisers prefer them as they pay in cash unlike supermarkets which get their supply on consignment."

Lolim said chicken production is down. He said his plant in the boundary of this town

and Rosario, La Union, now dresses between 9,000 and 10,000 chicken in a week. This was low compared to the previous average of 18,000 to 22,000.

The plant services Vitarich Corp., Tyson and Bounty Agri ventures and several poultry raisers in Northern Luzon.

"The members of the Philippine Association of Broiler Integrators (Pabi) trimmed down their production because they were already losing money, but they have started to restock last October," Lolim said.



OVERVIEW

Visitors in Antipolo City got an overview of New Year celebrations in Metro Manila as firecrackers of various types exploded in the sky at the stroke of midnight Jan. 1.

Low casualty count marks Mindanao's New Year

DAVAO CITY—Welcoming the New Year in Mindanao was relatively peaceful.

Although there were still violations of the firecracker ban in Davao City, not a single person was taken to hospital for firecracker injuries.

Chief Insp. Alberto Gines, chief of the Police Community Relation of the Davao City Police Office (DCPO), said nine persons were apprehended for violating the firecracker ban.

In General Santos City, where a firecracker ban was also imposed, only two persons were brought to the hospital for injuries.

But in Cotabato City, a martial arts instructor was shot dead while six revelers were reported injured.

Senior Supt. Isnaji Bantala, police chief for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, said the victims were all residents of Cotabato City.

But Bantala said the number could rise as reports from the other provinces still have to come in.

Police said Ben Cusain, a "karate master," died from multiple gunshot wounds in the body.

Cusain and his companion Kosh Sarip alighted from a pedicab when fired upon by a group armed with handguns in Barangay Poblacion Sur shortly before midnight.

Sarip survived with two bullet wounds in the body. Firecracker explosions by revelers resulted in injuries to five people, including four-year-old Kara Nicol.

Bantala said the number of casualties in the ARMM is expected to be caused by the indiscriminate firing of guns from civilians, most especially from lawless elements. *Charlie C. Señase, Aquiles Z. Zonio, Dennis Jay C. Santos with a report from Joselle d.R. Badilla, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

200 Subanens face homeless new year

OZAMIZ CITY—More than 40 mostly Subanen families whose houses were destroyed by big waves last year welcomed the new year uncertain where to locate their homes after they were served notice to vacate the area where they set up temporary shelters.

Timu Samuel Semino, a leader of the Subanen families, said they would not know where to seek shelter this year if the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP) finally implements the eviction notice it earlier gave them.

Currently, the families, num-

bering around 200 individuals, are staying in temporary housing units built within the foreshore portion of an old oil mill, a property that was foreclosed by DBP.

The families were among those living in 33 houses pummeled by big waves on Jan. 2, 2003 in Sitio Opol in Barangay Catadman.

Semino said they have asked the local government to request the DBP to allow them to extend their stay in the portion of the foreclosed property until their permanent resettlement site shall have been ready.

If the DBP decision pushes through, Semino said, they might

be tempted to go back to their old housing site, which exposes them again to the danger they faced a year ago.

The City Disaster Coordinating Council had dissuaded them from doing so in the past by making their collective decision not to return to the old site as a condition for the release of material assistance to rebuild their houses.

Semino said going back to the mountains is far fetched in their minds as most of them have been used to earning a living on the shores or in the city's commercial jungle for the last

15 years already.

Mayor Reynaldo Parojinog Sr. said a portion of a 17-hectare estate identified as an urban poor resettlement site has been allocated for the displaced families but their actual transfer to the area is constrained by technical questions.

The estate is still classified as timberland and its disposal rests on the national government through the environment department.

A reclassification of the land area through the issuance of an executive order by President Macapagal-Arroyo has been

worked out but to no avail.

Another possibility explored by the local government is including the displaced families among the beneficiaries of an upcoming housing project it will implement in partnership with the Couples for Christ's Gawad Kalinga Program.

The local government's share in the project is the purchase of the piece of land to be used as site of the Gawad Kalinga community.

Paced with an urgent housing need, the Subanens said they will take whichever comes first. *Ryan D. Rosaura, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

FIRECRACKERS, STRAY BULLETS

147 injured in Visayas during New Year revelry

CEBU CITY—At least 144 persons were treated for blast injuries while three became victims of stray bullets in key cities in the Visayas, despite the massive information drive against the use of firecrackers and pyrotechnic materials and the firing of firearms to greet the New Year.

The most victims were recorded in Negros Occidental, where 76 persons were injured in pyrotechnic and firecracker blasts, followed by the cities of Cebu (42), Iloilo (9), Tagbilaran (7), Dumaguete (5) and Tacloban (5).

In most hospitals, the victims were children who suffered from blast wounds mostly in the fingers and feet.

Among those injured during the New Year revelry in Negros Oriental included a police officer, who was wounded in a grenade explosion, and a woman who was hit by accidental firing of a handgun.

The Silliman University Medical Center (SUMC) in Dumaguete City declined to identify the police officer or give details of how he was injured by the grenade blast except to say that he was from Sibulan, a

town 6 km from Dumaguete.

A stray bullet injured Teresita Gallanero Suranilla, 57, Wednesday night in Hacienda Villa Elena, Manapla, Negros Occidental. Her head was grazed by a bullet that came from a gun fired allegedly by her godson Edgar Hofileña Dolarte, 34.

Bullet wound

Perfectiza Candiola, 53, of Siaton, Negros Oriental, about 50 km from Dumaguete City, was treated for a bullet wound in the buttock at the Negros Oriental Provincial Hospital (NOPH) shortly after 1 a.m. yesterday. She said she could not anymore remember how the gun of her son-in-law exploded at about midnight, or just as they were ushering in the New Year.

Another stray bullet victim, Manuel Cuyos, 15, of Barangay Tangke, Talisay City in Cebu was brought to the Cebu City Medical Center to get treatment for a gunshot wound in the hand.

Another stray bullet pierced the roof of the house of Vicente Villamor at the Tierra Grande Subdivision in Barangay Lawaan, Talisay City shortly after midnight. The bullet went through

the ceiling and hit the food-laden dining table, breaking the table's glass top.

Villamor said it was just fortunate that his family was still outside their house joining neighbors in the revelry to greet the New Year and were not yet eating. Otherwise, he said, somebody in his family would have been hurt.

The blast victims in Bacolod City were brought to the Corazon Locsin Montelibano Memorial Regional Hospital (28), Riverside Medical Center (7), the Doctor's Hospital (2), Bacolod Sanitarium and Hospital (8), and Our Lady of Mercy Specialty Hospital (2).

At the Bago City Hospital, seven were injured by pyrotechnics blasts, while at the Jose Locsin Memorial Hospital in Silay City, 22 were injured.

At Iloilo's Western Visayas Medical Center, 9 persons were treated for blast injuries.

Cebu casualties

In Cebu, 16 persons from ages 2 to 47 were treated for various blast injuries at the Don Vicente Sotto Memorial Medical Center and 26 at the Cebu City Medical Center.

Tacloban's blast victims were brought to the Eastern Visayas Regional Medical Center while those in Tagbilaran were treated mostly at the Gov. Celestino Gallares Memorial Hospital (GCGMH).

Earlier, the government-run Eastern Visayas Regional Medical Center went on a "white code" alert to anticipate an influx of blast victims.

But just hours after the white code went into effect three persons were already sent to the hospital for firecracker injuries.

In Bohol, the provincial command ordered all policemen to have their firearms inspected and taped Wednesday morning to discourage them from firing their guns on New Year's Eve.

Dr. Alden Tabao, who heads EVRMC's "Oplan: Iwas Paputok," said the white alert would mean that all medical staffers of the hospital, particularly of the surgery department, would be present 24 hours. *Carla Gomez, Joey Gabieta, Romy Amarado, Chito Fuentes, Nestor Burgos Jr., Edra Benedicto, Jani Arnaiz and Chito Fuentes, PDI Visayas Bureau*



Dagupan village fixes new time to celebrate 2004 with a bang

By Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

DAGUPAN CITY—While Filipinos traditionally welcome New Year early morning of Jan. 1, a village here holds their own revelry 12 hours later.

For about 10 years now, residents of Barangay Pugo Grande, where some of the firecrackers in the city are produced, would collect unsold explosives from manufacturers and hold their own version of a New Year celebration at noon of Jan. 1.

Jose Ramos, 34, former chair of Barangay Pugo Grande, said the residents would tie the firecrackers together and line them up along the barangay road. At the stroke of noon, a resident would light the firecrackers to signal the celebration.

The sound of explosives would reverberate in the entire village, after which the residents would partake of a New Year feast.

This year, however, is a more special celebration for the villagers as their unique practice was adopted as part of the activities for the city fiesta. Local officials, guests and balik-bayans came to take part in the celebrations.

Ramos said it was also this

year that the celebration was given an official name—the "Balon Kaaguwan (New Noon)."

The residents also created bigger and louder firecrackers to add to the unsold firecrackers that were used in the revelry on Thursday.

"Aside from the stringed explosives, some residents wanted to light their own explosives. But they had to wait for their turn so the explosions would be continuous," Ramos said.

In the early years of the celebration, residents did not coordinate the firecracker lighting and competed for attention on who among them had the loudest explosion.

Ramos said village officials asked the residents to cooperate with their efforts to organize the event.

For this year's celebration, some manufacturers contributed explosive materials while residents volunteered to manufacture them for free.

The residents always ask the Bureau of Fire Protection or other volunteer fire brigades for a fire truck in case a fire breaks out during the revelry.

"We do not want a repeat of an incident five years ago when a nipa hut was burned," Ramos said.

Tarlac school teachers get bonuses 1 yr late

TARLAC CITY—After a year-long delay, 155 public elementary and high school teachers in Tarlac have finally received their P3-million worth of bonuses due in 2002.

Claudette Sicat, chair of the Tarlac chapter of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT), said the teachers were newly hired and were occupying "extension positions."

Officials of the Tarlac schools division of the Department of Education signed the teachers' appointment papers as "permanent" teachers on June 17 last year but failed to submit the papers to the Civil Service Commission within the prescribed 30-day period.

As a result, the teachers' date of appointment was marked by CSC "to take effect not earlier than July 17, 2002," instead of June 17.

Due to this, education officials told the teachers, their extra cash gift (or GMA bonus) of P5,000 and 13th month pay of P14,939 each were not released.

But the explanation did not satisfy the teachers who sought ACT's help. Dialogues with DepEd provincial and regional officials were held to solve the problem.

Sicat said they found out that the teachers were entitled to the bonuses worth P19,939 each because the signature of the appointing authority, once affixed, was enough to seal

their appointment.

They also learned from a regional DepEd official that funds intended for the payment of bonuses for "extension teachers" in Tarlac had already been released in November 2002.

Victoria Aguas, Tarlac schools division superintendent, accompanied the claimant-teachers in a dialogue on Sept. 23. She also wrote the regional director of the CSC to request that the teachers' appointment "take effect on their actual first day of service (June 17)."

In October, the teachers received P4,000 each, and on Dec. 17, the teachers received the final payment of their 2002 bonuses worth P15,939 each.

The government has allotted at least P2.5 billion for bonuses of public school teachers and an education department official said any teacher who fails to get his or her bonus on time should complain to higher authorities in the department.

The sound of the funds for the bonuses comes at a time when the government is suffering from a double-digit deficit in its budget and has resorted to heavy borrowings to fill the gap.

It also came after teachers joined nationwide protests against delays in the release of loans and benefits from the Government Service Insurance System. *Russell Arador, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

FRIDAY, JANUARY 2, 2004

They lit a lot of firecrackers at Miko's wake

By Marinel R. Cruz

THE LATE actor Miko Sotto was looking forward to celebrating New Year with his cousin Oyo Boy at the home of his uncle Vic Sotto in Alabang.

But it was Oyo Boy who went to Miko instead. Only, it was at the latter's wake at the Sanctuary de San Antonio in Forbes Park, Makati, where the entire Sotto clan also welcomed 2004.

Miko died three days before the year ended, after he fell off from the 9th floor of the San Francisco Gardens Condominium in Mandaluyong City where he lived.

He will be laid to rest at 10 a.m. today at the Loyola Memorial Park in Sucat, Parañaque.

"We could not leave Miko's father, Maru, all alone at the wake, especially on New Year's Eve," Vic said of his youngest brother.

Miko was Maru's son with ex-wife actress and radio commentator Ali Sotto.

"We lighted a lot of firecrackers. It was what Miko and Oyo had planned to do at my house," Vic said.

Miko was with Oyo Boy and GMA 7 production designer Marko Medina, when the accident happened. A friend of Oyo Boy's was also with them.

Miko's elder brother, Chino,

22, who is based in Los Angeles, California, arrived in Manila on Wednesday morning.

Vic said that because of the accident, Ali would not let Chino live in the US anymore. "Ali wanted his son near her all the time," Vic added.

Deeply affected

Oyo Boy was also deeply affected by Miko's accident, according to his dad. "He's very

strong," Vic said.

"But I've never seen him cry the way he did when he met Chino last Wednesday. *Pinakamatinding iyak na yun.* My son was greatly hurt by what happened to his cousin."

Miko was part of GMA 7's afternoon soap series "Walang Hanggan" with Oyo Boy and Valerie Concepcion.

He was also seen in the soap series "Kung Mawawala Ka,"

which featured Cogie Domingo and Sunshine Dizon.

Miko was an original member of the cast of the youth-oriented series "Click" and Bong Revilla's sitcom "Idol Ko Si Kap," both seen on GMA 7.

On the TV channel's "SOP," a Sunday noontime variety show, he teamed up with Oyo in a segment called "Got To Go," where the cousins gave cool advice to their fellow teenagers.

MMDA office set on fire by vendors

By Margaux Ortiz

THE SIEGE in Baclaran continues.

Metropolitan Manila Development Authority operatives together with the police yesterday raided a Muslim community after four suspected illegal vendors torched an MMDA office in Baclaran.

MMDA Clearing Operations Team head Bobby Esquivel said Reynaldo Garcia, 21, an illegal vendor, admitted that he burned an MMDA Organized Bus Route office around 2:45 a.m. yesterday with three other unidentified companions.

Garcia, who was arrested with six pillboxes in his possession, said his cohorts were able to seek refuge in a Muslim community near the Baclaran seaside.

Esquivel said the authorities raided the shanties around 10:30 a.m. and made 300 men stand in line for Garcia to point the other suspects to the police.

Garcia, however, failed to identify his other companions, saying they may have already escaped.

"We will not stop until we put this matter to rest," Esquivel, who estimated the damages to be around P100,000, told the INQUIRER.

Esquivel said the MMDA has requested for additional police back-up from the National Capital Region Police Office for its clearing operations in the area.

Different resolutions for different people

By Tarra Quismundo

FROM among the promenaders who once again trooped to the Rizal Park in Manila yesterday, there were those who wanted to make a change, while others preferred to stay the same.

Andy Reyes, 40, would rather not make a promise of changing any of his ways or habits, so that he would not disappoint himself when he breaks it.

"I am okay this way," Reyes said in Filipino, a jobless single man.

But others preferred to make their resolutions.

"I want to stop cursing and saying bad words," said Jessica Rodriguez, 14, a second-year high school student.

Her friend, Karen Picayo, also 14, wishes to get rid of her cursing habit this year.

METROBRIEFS

New Year gift to cops

THE NATIONAL Police Commission (Napolcom) has approved the meritorious promotion of 1,425 police officers who defended Malacañang from supporters of former President Joseph Estrada on May 1, 2001. Interior Secretary and Napolcom Chair Jose Lina Jr. said the Napolcom granted the special promotion to the police officers, whose ranks range from Police Officer 1 (PO1) to Chief Inspector, "in recognition of their acts of conspicuous courage and gallantry at the risk of their own lives in upholding the law and preserving peace and order in the country in the face of a raging mob during and in the days leading to the so-called May 1 siege."

Margaux Ortiz

Computer shops warned

COMPUTER shops and internet cafes beware. Robbers are now also hot on computer wares. After the New Year's Eve celebration, robbers barged into a computer shop in Caloocan City and took away more than P500,000 worth of computers. About 3:30 a.m., neighbors saw at least four men loading the computers from Wind-dlee Computer Shop in Morning Breeze Subdivision onto a red L300 FP van. The witnesses rushed to the house of owner Edwin Barcial, 45, to report what they saw. But when the owner and several family members went to the shop, the robbers were gone, the owner's nephew Elijah Chito Mendoza said.

Edson Castro Tandoc Jr.

Meeting on Parkinson's

THE PARKINSON'S Support Group of the Philippines Foundation (PSGP) will hold a general meeting and lecture on Jan. 4, 2004 at 12 noon at the auditorium of the Cathedral Heights Building (South Tower), 14th floor, St. Luke's Medical Center, on E. Rodriguez Sr. Avenue. Lunch will be served free. Dr. Virgilio Gerard Evidente, medical adviser of the PSGP, will discuss latest updates on Parkinson's disease, parkinsonism, dystonia, and tremor disorders. He will also discuss the latest research in gene therapy and new drugs being studied for Parkinson's disease. Interested parties may call the Movement Disorders Centers at 727-5552 or 723-0301 local 3101 (ask for Lala)



SAFE DISTANCE

Many revellers who welcomed the New Year yesterday kept distance from firecrackers and contented themselves with lighting less deadly stuff like "Fountain" in Quezon City. To them, it proved to be a better way of merrymaking.

BOY CARRIDO

Fiery start . . .

From page A18

in Balic-balic, Sampaloc, also went up in flames, damaging P900,000 worth of property. It was completely put out at 2:01 a.m.

Jason Ladisla, 22, suffered second degree burns on his left arm.

At 8:47 a.m., a 21-minute fire of still unknown origin damaged a room of a five-story apartment along P. Campa Street.

North Metro

In Northern Metro Manila, five fires broke out and 35 families homeless.

Fire investigators believe that most of the fires were caused by firecrackers.

The first fire broke out about 7:15 p.m. on New Year's Eve on Davila Street, Barangay 8, Navotas. It lasted for 10 minutes.

At 12:15 a.m., Jan. 1, 2004, fire broke out at a residential area at the back of the Caloocan City Hall but it was quickly put out by residents.

Eight minutes later, however, another fire started along Ramadad Street, Bagong Barrio, Caloocan City, and gutted 15 houses. It started at house 205, which was used as a warehouse of Mega Strong Machine Shop.

Arjay Quinones, 20, suffered a cut in his right foot during the fire.

Damages were estimated at P2 million. Fire out was declared at 1:36 a.m.

Case investigator FO1 Marcelino Espeso III said his initial findings point to a firecracker that fell into scraps as the cause of fire.

At 1:45 a.m., a four-hour fire hit a two-story building at 193 Gov. Pascual Ave., Catmon, Malabon City.

Makati blaze

A residential compound, including the houses of sportscaster Chino Trinidad's in-laws, was razed by fire a few hours before New Year's Day.

Around 20 families inside the compound on No. 5724 Calasan St., Barangay Olympia, lost their homes during the three-hour fire, which began around 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday and was put out at 10:28 p.m.

According to SFO1 Samuel Guzman, the fire started inside the house of compound tenant Rudy dela Cruz.

Compound owner Crispulo Dineros told firemen that Dela Cruz had stopped paying his rent and utility bills which prompted the electric provider to cut off his electricity.

Dineros' grandson and Chino Trinidad's brother-in-law Bock Gajasan said the tenant was cooking when the fire broke out.

Gajasan said Dela Cruz may have left his stove untended which caused the blaze.

"We are not having a happy new year because we lost all our possessions," Gajasan, whose house stood beside the compound, told the INQUIRER. "We are only grateful that nobody was injured during this tragedy."

Pasay also hit

Meanwhile, another fire destroyed P3 million worth of baby equipment in Pasay City yesterday.

FO3 Renato Recto said the fire began at midnight inside the MDCN Repacking Co. building, owned by Manuel Koh, on 2475 Tolentino St. corner Facundo Street.

Firecrackers finish off . . .

From page A18

said.

Wednesday's fire, which destroyed some P400,000 worth in property, started at the stall of Reynaldo Sabinosa, a firecracker vendor.

Sabinosa told the police that he was loading goods into his Toyota Tamaraw FX (PBZ 210), parked beside his stall when the firecrackers he had set down on the sidewalk started exploding.

And before he could react, a blaze had started and began eating up his stall. Fire quickly spread to 19 other stalls, which were spared by the fire that hit the market the night before.

In the confusion, Sabinosa forgot to secure his vehicle, which was damaged.

Ruling out arson, fire authorities said a burning firecracker could have landed on Sabinosa's goods and set them off.

NCRPO wish: Tech-savvy police force

By Edson Castro Tandoc Jr.

A POLICE force enhanced by technology.

This is what director Ricardo de Leon envisions for the National Capital Region Police Office in 2004, saying that technology would play a major part in their continued campaign against criminality.

The focus on technology would begin with the basic necessities: radio equipment and guns. Some police officials had earlier said their men lack radio facilities.

Next in the list is the setting up of an advanced computer information system where police could organize data more efficiently. With computer-aided information systems, processing of intelligence information and dissemination of data would be faster and more systematic.

Third in De Leon's list is the installation of computer plate scanners in checkpoints.

He said that in several European countries, scanners of vehicle plates are set up in the streets.

With the gadget, policemen could easily locate vehicles. When an alarm of a stolen vehicle is flashed, the scanners could monitor the vehicles passing through the checkpoints.

The bottomline, however, is this: will there be enough budget for the planned technological improvement?

De Leon vowed, however, that despite budget constraints, the police would "remain on our toes" in 2004 and continue the fight against drugs, terrorism and street crimes.

The 11 checkpoints set up all over the metropolis in November will also continue in 2004.

New Year violence: 21 dead

By Tina Santos, Leila Salaverria and Edson Tandoc Jr.

TWENTY-ONE people were killed in separate shooting and stabbing incidents during the last hours of 2003 and the first hours of 2004.

Eight people, including a housewife, were killed in Quezon City.

Shooting, stabbing

Joel Bruce, 23, and Allan Abajencia, 26, died while the latter's elder brother Angelito, 32, was seriously injured in a shooting incident on Acacia Street, Barangay Pag-asa at 12:30 a.m.

In Novaliches, Romulo Arelano, 49, died from a gunshot wound from an improvised gun. He was shot during a free-for-all along Kilyawan Street, Sitio Aguardiente.

At 1:50 a.m. Rodel Banzon was shot dead along Rolex Street, Barangay Commonwealth.

At the Arboretum in Diliman, Crisanto Lucban was found dead with a gunshot wound in the body. He reportedly earlier had an argument with a member of the UP police force.

Jealousy

In Barangay Tatalon, 45-year-old Aguinaldo Hernandez was found with multiple stab wounds near his house on Kaliraya Street, Cluster 14 at 3:15 a.m.

Meanwhile, Vilma de Jesus was reportedly stabbed to death by her jealous live-in partner, Alfredo Papa, inside their rented room on Manunggal Street, Barangay Tatalon.

In Manila, seven persons were killed.

Among them was P01 Nelson Gonzales, 34, who was stabbed dead by men whom he accused of stealing his scooter.

At 8:30 a.m., Teodora Ronquillo, 62, of E. Rodriguez Street, Pasay City, never got to enjoy her birthday, which also fell on New Year, after she was pushed out of a jeepney along Taft Avenue during a suspected robbery.

Two hours earlier, houseboy Pio Picandal, 25, killed his 69-year-old employer Benjamin Zape in Tondo, Manila.

Unruly

Also yesterday, at 3:30 a.m., truck helper Modesto Bagay, 29, became unruly inside his house in Binondo and was shot dead inside his house by barangay tanoos who had come to pacify him.

Meanwhile, Jeffrey Alfaro, 36, was hacked in the head in front of his house along Pacheco Street in Tondo.

On New Year's Eve in Tondo, Rodolfo Ricate, 16, was stabbed dead by three young men at the corner of Sto. Cristo Street and C.M. Recto Avenue.

The suspects were identified as Michael Ibanes, 18, Marlon Masemanes, 21, and a certain Philip, 17.

Six more

Yesterday morning, Larry Briones, 32, was stabbed dead by neighbor Ferdinand Constantino, 30, along Natividad Street in Sta. Cruz Manila.

Over at the northern part of Metro Manila, six other men fell were killed in a spate of violence that accompanied the New Year.



EYESORE

After the revelry comes the misery, at least for residents. In some areas in Metro Manila, such as this one along Sucat Road in Parañaque, piles of garbage remain uncollected.

ERIK ARAZAS

Atienza eyes more dev't projects

By Tarra Quismundo

IF IT WERE up to Manila Mayor Joselito Atienza Jr., 2004 will see more development projects for the city.

"We will do more projects, and we will double our efforts," said Atienza in an interview.

Atienza stands firm in continuing his Buhayin ang Maynila program this year, seemingly unfazed by those who oppose it.

"My New Year's wish is that people will start appreciating the projects, less detractors and negativity, more positive thinkers," he said.

From Atienza's Park 'N Ride

project in 2001, the still unsettled and pending City Colleges of Manila construction on part of the historic Mehan Gardens, this year's Muelle del Rio linear park project and the Rizal Avenue pedestrianization project, incited criticism from politicians and Manila residents alike.

Aside from issues on the legality of his projects, the most recent of which is the closure of a portion of Rizal Avenue to give way to what he had called an open space shopping mall, heavy traffic has been one of the leading causes why Atienza has been put on the hot seat.

Manila 3rd District Rep. Harry

Angping said that while Atienza's intention in pursuing his many projects may be good, they seem to be a disadvantage to liveli-hood.

"And traffic is an important part of liveli-hood. If you were a businessman, would you go to an area where it is difficult to park and put up your business there?" Angping explained.

He said that City Hall should instead work to ease traffic, and "should stop the creation or parks on streets."

"Open spaces could be used, but not streets to the expense of pedestrians and vehicles," Angping said.

METRO

Fiery start for 2004

20 fires destroy P20 million in property

By the Metro Reportorial Staff

TWENTY fires brought a fiery welcome to 2004.

Most hit was Manila, which had six fires which destroyed over P10 million in property.

Six persons, including three firefighters, were also injured.

First to break out was a fire that destroyed the window of a two-story house on Vicente Cruz Street at 10:43 p.m. It was started by a child playing with matches and lasted for 9 minutes.

At 11:10 p.m. along Paternal Street in Quiapo, a box of firecrackers was ignited when a child threw a lighted cigarette into it. Fortunately, it spared the house where it was in.

On Dangal Street, Bacood, Sta. Mesa, the first fire of the year hit at 12:04 a.m. and gutted a three-door-apartment. It was caused by a candle lighting up a curtain.

Damaged was estimated at P500,000.

Six minutes later, falling firecrackers sparked a fire at the Bukang Liwayway House for the Disabled at the corner of

Arlegui Street and Duque de Alba Street in Quiapo.

The five-and-a-half hour blaze destroyed 15 to 18 houses, including a home for the disabled. Over 50 families were left homeless, and damage was estimated at P9 million.

Three firemen were hit by falling debris and a 9-year-old boy was hurt when he stepped on broken glass. Several Spanish-era homes were burned to the ground.

At 12:40 a.m., a two-story apartment



A SPANISH-ERA house along Arlegui Street, Quiapo, Manila, becomes history as it is eaten by fire during the first hour of 2004.

BOY CARBIDO

FIERY/A17

Firecrackers finish off Antipolo market

By Luige del Puerto

LIGHTNING is said not to strike one place twice, but nobody said anything about firecrackers.

At 12:30 a.m. yesterday, firecrackers finished off what remained of the Antipolo City public market which was first gutted Tuesday night by a wayward rocket.

At least 20 stalls fronting the market building along Sumulong Street went up in flames, according to F03 Epifanio Ragotero.

The fire raged for two hours, Ragotero

FIRECRACKERS/A17

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Pacquiao title clash with Marquez off

By Salven L. Lagumbay

THE PLANNED mammoth confrontation between universal featherweight champ Manny Pacquiao and WBA/IBF featherweight king Juan Manuel Marquez will not push through after all.

The INQUIRER learned from the camp of Marquez yesterday that the Mexican known as Dinamita (Dynamite) has just received a notice from Top Rank boss Bob Arum to first face Armenian fighter William Abelyan sometime in February in Las Vegas.

The fight with Marquez, which would have guaranteed Pacquiao a \$1 million payday, was being arranged to be held either in late March or early April.

Pacquiao's American trainer Freddie Roach had criticized the Filipino's planned title date with Marquez, saying it was a high-risk, low-return proposition for the conqueror of Mexican featherweight great Marco Antonio Barrera.

Roach said Pacquiao can easily win at least \$1.5 million fighting either Paulie Ayala or Johnny Tapia, who are not in the cal-

iber of Marquez.

His disenchantment over the way Pacquiao's career was being handled by his US agent Murad Muhammad was one of the reasons Roach cited when he resigned as the Filipino's trainer the other day.

Roach said he was not also rightfully compensated as trainer of Pacquiao in the Filipino's last four fights in the US.

Abelyan, a 25-year-old southpaw nicknamed "The Conqueror," boasts of a 23-4-1 record with 12 KOs. He has been on a 13-fight unbeaten streak since 2000. He is rated WBO No. 1, WBC No. 8 and WBA No. 9 featherweight.

Marquez owns a record of 42-2, with 33 KOs. He unified the WBA and IBF titles with a 7th round technical decision win over Derrick Gainer last Nov. 1.

PACQUIAO: Early bout with Marquez highly risky, says ex-trainer Freddie Roach. GETTY IMAGES



Gamboa seeks WBC junior fly crown Jan. 10

CEBU CITY—Ex-WBA minimumweight champ Joma Gamboa will try to wrest the World Boxing Council junior flyweight crown when he fights Jorge "Travieso" Arce on Jan. 10 in Tijuana, Mexico.

The Liloan, Cebu-based Gamboa, ranked WBA No. 2 and WBC No. 13, left yesterday for Mexico along with trainer Juanito Ablaca on a Lufthansa Airways flight. They will be met in Tijuana by Gamboa's Japanese manager Joe Kuizumi.

The 12-round fight is scheduled at the Centro de Exposiciones del Hipodromo de Americas in Tijuana, which is some 2,200 meters above sea level.

"I know the odds will be stacked against me, but I will do everything I can in the toughest fight of my career," Gamboa said yesterday.

Trainer Ablaca admits that Gamboa (33-7-2, 22 KOs) will be facing a formidable opponent in Arce (34-3-1, 25 KOs), who is called Travieso (Naughty) by the Mexican boxing press.

He said Gamboa had less than two months of preparation for the title fight at the world-class ALA Gym of boxing patron Tony Aldeguer.

"He had sparred about 70 rounds against some topnotch boxers at the ALA Gym. He is ready, but we are still the underdogs," Ablaca said, noting Mexico's high altitude and avid fan support will be tremendous assets for the tough Arce. **Salven L. Lagumbay, contributor**

UAAP stars shine in SEA Games campaign

FAR Eastern University took the biggest trophy while De La Salle tries to wrest the overall plum from Santo Tomas in what has been a rousing University Athletic Association of the Philippines (UAAP) season so far.

While the riveting basketball action that saw FEU dethrone Ateneo continued to be its main attraction, the league takes pride in slowly transforming its image into one that puts premium on Olympism.

"So far so good," says Jose Capistrano Jr., president of the UAAP's 66th season, referring to the league's bid to snap out of an image centered on basketball.

"The theme that dwells on Olympism is being achieved and we

are proud and grateful the league's members are making all that possible."

"We started the season with the goal of maintaining the quality of competition in men's basketball. That, the league achieved. But the other UAAP events in the calendar are getting the same attention and quality of competition," he adds.

To further emphasize that the UAAP helps hone and culture athletes for international competitions, league officials noted that many of its athletes were among the 48 gold medalists in the recent 22nd Southeast Asian Games in Vietnam.

Roel Ramirez of the University of the East won a men's gymnastics gold medal, and so did taekwondo



MALALAD



YAP



BONIFACIO

jins Margarita Bonifacio of Ateneo and Dax Morfe of De La Salle. Rich Alvarez, James Yap and Wesley Gonzales helped retain the men's basketball gold medal and, even though karatedo is not on the UAAP

roster, Gretchen Malalad did her alma mater UST proud.

A contingent led by UST's Fr. Ermito de Sagun and Felicitas Francisco cheered Filipino athletes in Ho Chi Minh. Another board member,

Bren Perez of UE, was team manager of the weightlifting squad in Hanoi. Many more were on the coaching staff or donned uniforms and battled the best in the region.

All told, there were 45 athletes, officials and coaches in the 600-strong RP delegation to Vietnam.

"We are proud of them," says Capistrano. "They deserve to be on the delegation and compete for the country."

Before the Vietnam joust, Koy Banal beat his brother Joel at the Ateneo bench in a battle dubbed a "holy war." The Tamaraws fulfilled what many predicted and clinched their 17th men's basketball trophy to become the third "winningest" team in the UAAP after UE and UST,

both with 18 victories each.

Approaching the end of the 66th season, De La Salle has started moves to dethrone UST as overall champion.

De La Salle topped men's and women's volleyball and men's chess and women's swimming to lead the race for overall honors. UE, victorious in boys' chess and table tennis, and UST, the boys' and girls' swimming champion, pace the juniors' race.

Currently being contested are tennis, men's baseball, women's softball and juniors volleyball, and in the next two months, men's football, judo, track and field, taekwondo, badminton and fencing will take center stage.

ABC-5 gets PBA TV rights for P100M

Network's 'realistic' offer does it

By June Navarro

TELEVISION network ABC-5 has secured exclusive coverage of the Philippine Basketball Association games this year.

Owned by former PLDT big boss Tonyboy Cojuangco, ABC-5 beat NBN-4, Jemah Television and Solar Sports after presenting what a reliable source said was a more "realistic" offer, which includes P100 million as guaranteed payment for TV coverage rights.

The new partnership becomes effective, however, only after ABC-5 presents a contract assuring the league of its financial commitment.

The network's proposal, presented by ABC-5 representative Bobby Barreiro, got the nod of the PBA board without giving the league the assurance of a bank guarantee, the same source added.

ABC-5, which is reportedly embarking on a massive drive to keep up with ABS-CBN and GMA-7, plans to transmit the

first games of the PBA on Wednesdays and Fridays on a delayed basis while both games on Sundays will be telecast live.

"Only the second game on Wednesdays and Fridays will be aired live. The curtain-raisers of those playdates would either be shown late at night or the following day," said the INQUIRER source.

The PBA is expected to have a taste of ABC-5's television expertise during the Annual Rookie Draft set Dec. 16 at the Glorietta Activity Center in Makati.

Meanwhile, San Miguel Beer has offered its franchise player Danny Ildefonso a maximum monthly paycheck of P350,000 for the next two to three years.

A San Miguel insider said that Ildefonso, back-to-back MVP in 1999 and 2000, would be the last one to go, dousing speculations that the 6-foot-6 slotman is on the trading block.

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C. de Oro pug dies 3 days after KO loss

By Salven L. Lagumbay

CEBU CITY—Cagayan de Oro City boxer John Eman Juarez died yesterday at the Cebu Doctors' Hospital here three days after he was knocked out in Danao City by ALA Boy Rocky Fuentes.

Juarez was declared dead at 1 a.m. on New Year's Day. He left behind a 2-year-old son, Brave Eman, and wife Brenda.

Juarez was knocked out in the fourth round of a scheduled 8-rounder Sun-

day. He was immediately brought to a hospital when he failed to respond to first-aid and then was transferred to the Cebu Doctors' Hospital, where he underwent surgery to remove blood clots in his brain.

Emmanuel Juarez, John Eman's father, said the body would be brought to Cagayan de Oro last night on board a WGA ship. GAB representative Vic Cabalog, who arranged for the transfer of the body from the pier to the Somo Funeral Parlor in Cagayan, was to meet

them at the pier this morning.

Before leaving last night, Emmanuel Eman asked for a copy of the tape of the fight from sportsman Tony Aldeguer, manager of Fuentes. Emmanuel said he would show it to his relatives to dispel notions that he was careless in assisting his boxer-son.

"This tape will prove to them that nobody was to be blamed, and the fight was not one-sided. It was an accident," Emmanuel said.

Emmanuel also asked from Aldeguer

a set of ALA shirts, which is considered priceless in the boxing circle here.

"My son really wanted so much to become an ALA Boy. He always looked forward to wearing them," Emmanuel reminisced.

Meanwhile, promoter Sammy "Don King" Gello-ani wants to recruit John Eman's wife, Brenda, as an employee of their company in Cagayan de Oro City to help her support Brave Eman.

Brenda is currently a trainee at Oro Rama supermarket.

Guimaras plays host to national triathlon tilt

TRIATHLON, one of the fastest-growing adventure and Olympic sports in the country, finds a new venue when the island province of Guimaras in the Visayas hosts the National Triathlon Championships on Feb. 1.

"We welcome the opportunity to host for the first time this event in our province and it is a very good way to promote the natural attractions of Guimaras through sports tourism event like the national triathlon championship, to be held simultaneously with the 5th national inter-club competition," said Guimaras Gov. Rahman Nava, who has thrown his full support behind the project.

TRAP president Tom Carrasco said holding major triathlon events in different provinces is their way of promoting the sport.

"We are happy that we have found another new venue. This is the first time that we are holding the national triathlon championship separate from the Subic International Triathlon as part of the changes we introduced in our schedule," said Carrasco, who, in the past, has held the interclub competition in Dumaguete, Cebu and Iloilo.

The 2004 Guimaras National Triathlon Championship and Interclub Competition will start at the Raymen beach resort in Nueva Valencia and will end at the provincial capitol in Jordan, Guimaras.

The event features the standard distance of 1.5K swim-40K bike-10K run while the sprint distance for junior triathletes is 750 swim-20K bike-5K run.

SPORTSWATCH

Tourney to select Milo chess team to US set tomorrow

THE FINAL round of the tournament to select the members of the US-bound Milo Checkmate team begins at 9:30 a.m. tomorrow at the MCC headquarters on the fourth floor of J&F Divino Bldg., 967 Aurora Blvd. in Quezon City. Six final berths will be contested by the 14 semifinalists and last year's members of the team. They will be divided into three age-groups. Sixteen-year-old Emmanuel Emperado of St. James College of Parañaque and 11-year-old Gabriel Layugan of Ateneo are seeded outright to the team by virtue of their strong performances in international tournaments. Emperado, whose trip was financed by the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, placed No. 9 in the Under 2200 category of the World Open held in Philadelphia last July. Layugan tied for first with top seed Liu Zheng of China during the Beijing Invitational Youth Chess Championships (under 10) held in Beijing, China, last July 2001. The event is organized by the Metropolitan Chess Club and Checkmate Phils.

Sunkist-UST finds a new deadly hand

N OBODY paid attention to Sunkist-UST at the start of the PBL Platinum Cup.

Now coaches are having a hard time figuring out how to stop the Tigers from growling and creating havoc on their qualifying ambitions.

Credit for the Tigers' amazing transformation from a mediocre team to a hotshot squad go to their newfound confidence and to a player with the hottest pair of hands right now—Jemal Vizcarra.

The 6-foot-1 AB sociology junior is slowly and surely making a name for himself, even creating more impact than some established players who are about to join the pro ranks.

In his team's masterful 89-83 win over league-leading and defending champion Welcoat Paints last Dec. 22, Vizcarra banged in 25 points, including back-to-back triples in the waning moments of the game that spelled the difference.

"Tsamba lang po iyon. Maganda rin kasi ang nilaro ng mga kasama ko kaya siguro maganda rin ang laro ko (I was lucky. My teammates played well and perhaps it rubbed off on me)," Vizcarra humbly said.

Pure luck? Certainly not.

It was the second straight time that he made more than 20 points. But more than that, the 20-year-old Vizcarra outshone Welcoat's top gunner James Yap. And not even the combined effort of pro-bound Paul Artadi and 6-foot-8 Ervin Sotto could stop him.

The third straight win—their longest

GAMES SATURDAY (Pasig Sports Center)
2 p.m.—Viva-FEU vs Blustar
4 p.m.—Flash Liquid vs Montana

streak—was doubly satisfying for Vizcarra and company as the Tigers claimed the second semifinal berth. The Paint Masters secured the first slot a week before the league took a holiday break.

Even Alex Compton, the only certified star in the Sunkist-UST lineup, acknowledged the solid performance of his teammates, especially Vizcarra.

"Welcoat played tough defense on me but good thing my teammates played well, especially Jemal. He was really hot," said Compton, who was held to just 9 points, a far cry from his 31-point show during an earlier overtime win over Montaña, where Vizcarra also scattered 28 points.

Even Welcoat coach Leo Austria had some glowing words for Vizcarra.

"He's really deadly, you can't afford to leave him open because he's capable of hitting long treys," said Austria, who has compared the hard-working Vizcarra with Allan Caidic for his quick jumpers from beyond the 3-point area.



JEMAL Vizcarra (left) tries to elude Ateneo's CJ Tiu in a UAAP game last October. The spitfire Sunkist-UST sentinel has become one of the toasts of the PBL.

AUGUST DELA CRUZ

"May ilalabas pa ang batang iyan! La-long gagaling 'yan kapag mapasama sa team na may magagaling na tao din (He's going to get better in the company of better players)," Austria added.

Aside from his deadly touch from long range, Vizcarra, a self-confessed Johnny Abarrrientos fan since his high school days at Adamson, is also a crowd-pleaser with

his devil-may-care drives.

With his talent and discipline, he isn't in a hurry to embrace pro stardom, however. Not this early, not next year.

"I still have two years to play in the UAAP and I'm dead set on finishing my course. Pahinog muna ako rito sa (I want to take my time here in the) PBL," beamed Vizcarra.

Marave braces for harder life on AF3 lane

IF 2003 was tough, expect 2004 to be tougher.

The country's top open-wheel racer, Jose Luis "Pepon" Marave, is bracing for a harder albeit more exciting life on the track when he defends his Asian Formula 3 championship this year.

The 37-year-old lead driver of Shell Helix-Kinetic racing team said the expected participation of more foreign drivers from China, Hong Kong and Australia will provide more glitter and spice to the competition.

"These foreign drivers will be coming in with faster cars," he said. "For sure the races will be tougher."

Marave ruled this year's AF3 series by registering six first places and five second-place finishes in the 12 races held in Subic Bay and Batangas race tracks in the Philippines, at the Bira Circuit in Pattaya, Thailand, at the Autopolis track in Japan and in Beijing, China.

As early as the 11th race in Batangas,



MARAVE celebrates after winning the Asian Formula 3 crown.

Marave has the title in the bag by posting a comfortable lead over former champion Mark Goddard of Great

Britain.

Marave credited his impressive performance to his team of mechanics and to Shell Helix, the lubricant that kept his Toyota engine running flawlessly throughout the series.

"My mechanics delivered when it mattered most," he said, recalling several times when he almost didn't make it to the starting line due to some last-minute glitches. "I really thank them and Shell Helix for being there. I could never have won any race without their help."

Marave is often considered the Philippines' version of Michael Schumacher, the six-time Formula 1 champion whose sponsors—Shell and Pila—he shares. Unlike Schumacher, however, Marave doesn't have a company like Ferrari to design and maintain his car. They're on their own when it comes to maintaining the Dallara 300 race car that Marave drives.

In fact the new challenge for them

now is how to make the old car faster to keep up with the foreign drivers' cars.

"The foreign drivers will definitely have newer cars, mas sarira (more fresh) and more high-tech," he said. "We need to make some modifications on our car to raise its quality to their level."

Marave got a taste of things to come in the last two races of this year's series. Australian Christian Jones, son of 1980 Formula 1 World Champion Alan Jones, joined the field as a guest entry but was slow in practice sessions. But Jones showed his true worth in the actual races and ended up the winner.

Despite the tougher competition next year, Shell Helix marketing manager Edwin Laset remains optimistic of Marave's and Shell Helix-Kinetic team's chances of retaining the title.

"The team is now more experienced. We believe in Pepon's leadership and we expect greater things from him in 2004," Laset said.

Cebuana Lhuillier Manila slo-pitch softball champs

CEBUANA Lhuillier beat Sta. Fe in sudden-death, 17-15, recently to top the Fall Season tournament of the Manila Slo-pitch Softball League (MSSL). The Pawnbrokers, who topped the elimination round with a 9-3 win-loss record, beat defending champion Meralco in the semifinals and enjoyed a "twice-to-beat" edge in the finals against Sta. Fe. Cebuana Lhuillier dropped the first game, 12-7, but leaned on power-playing Julius Visaya in the do-or-die second game to prevail. Headed by team owner Henri Lhuillier and manager-captain Lan Perez, the Pawnbrokers also ruled the tough Division A category of last year's Pangaea Cup 10 international slo-pitch tournament. The Cebuana Lhuillier team is composed of team consultant Pepe Munoz, Jeff Hardillio, Kiko Ramos, Tata Empacis, Jot Angeles, Larry Icban, Mr. Bradshaw, Ernesto Binara, Julius Visaya, Bubut Dizer, Mike Hilton, Vio Roxas, Dennis Nuevo, Desi Hebron, RJ Manzano, Kiko Diaz, Rayner Sangil and Ron Sangil. The main proponent of slo-pitch softball in the country, MSSL started off as a league for United States Embassy personnel in the mid-1970s. The league provides a venue for local softball players to play at a competitive level. Among the best-known players to have played in the league are softball legends Rudy Lugay and Boy Codinera.

Wish

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza



MY main wish this year is for the arrest of the mastermind in the attempt on the life of Go Teng Kok, the indefatigable track and field head who survived three bullets pumped into his face last July (one missed). It's a wish more profound than my wish to run for governor of Pangasinan in May.

If that won't come true, fine. But I'll really feel low if GTK's would-be killer/s aren't arrested and put behind bars. But I'll hound our lawmen up to the edges of the earth, most especially Angelo Reyes, for their ineptness.

Reyes, parading dead kidnappers almost in a frenzy he might yet overshadow our hawkers' unorthodox style of peddling their wares on the sidewalks of Manila, should catch Go's assassin/s quick if only to prove his worthiness as the nation's no-nonsense anti-crime chief that he's been styling himself about the past weeks. If it's true Reyes is running for senator, the more reason he should produce the mastermind. Achieving that, Reyes could trigger an avalanche of votes

in his favor in May, courtesy of the nation's athletes and sportsmen. This nation has long been weighed down by crimes and lawlessness that for the botched assassination of Go to end up as another mere statistic in our police files would be already too much to take.

Solving the GTK murder try before the May elections should restore the sporting world's faith on the government's ability to protect all of us, athlete or no athlete.

Leaving it unsolved is another indictment of the government's inutile crime-busting ways that have long been a bane to society.

My other wishes:

Number 1. Win our first gold medal in the Athens Olympics in August.

I may be selfish, subjective even if you will, but I must insist our strongest chance in realizing that elusive dream could only come in boxing.

Through the years, boxing has been a consistent hauler of honors for the country abroad. But, alas, through the

years only in professional boxing have we achieved one laurel after another—Pancho Villa, Little Dado, Ceferino Garcia, Flash Elnorde, Pedro Adigue, Rene Barrientos, Luisito Espinosa and now, Manny Pacquiao.

Never have we attained something big in amateur boxing; the closest to having done that happened first in the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, when Anthony Villanueva lost the gold medal to a Russian surnamed Stephaskin. Thirty-two years later, in the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, Onyok Velasco would suffer the same fate, losing the gold to a Bulgarian surnamed Bujolov.

I know that Manny Lopez, the coun-

try's amateur boxing chief, has been hurting, terribly suffering, over the miseries his boxers have had to endure in trying to chase that Olympic gold medal. Chowdry or no Chowdry, I'm sure Manny is not quitting, will never stop, until he achieves that dream. I know I can only wish, but rest assured I am backing it up with a prayer—in Manaoag, Pakil's tumbura, Don Enrique's Our Lady of Remedies, in my room.

Number 2. See Eric Buhain and Cito Dayrit forge a genuine pact for a unified action in the country's campaign in the Athens Olympics. To begin with, why don't you guys adopt this slogan, "GMA Tayo!" in the run-up to Athens? Before you start thinking silly things, GMA here means "Gold Medal in Athens." Promise, I will not charge you a single cent once you adopt it. For the love of country, my slogan is for free. Just make sure you invite me once you launch the project, OK? And when I come, please reserve a seat too for my companion: FPJ. Oops, before you start thinking

something silly again, FPJ here means "Fernando Pacquiao Jr."

Any objections? ***

FASTBREAK. There couldn't be a better choice to head the Bureau of Immigration and Deportation than Al Fernandez. Before GMA appointed Fernandez to the post, the undefeated mayor of Dagupan City was Pareng Joey Lina's deputy at the DILG. Not because he is my buloy, but believe you me, the new commissioner is a handsome catch for GMA. Not many know this but when my buloy, as Dagupan City mayor, staged the World Junior Volleyball Grand Prix in his turf in 2000, he received an award for "hosting the best World Volleyball Grand Prix ever" from the FIVB (World Volleyball Federation). That was just one of Buloy Al's numerous accolades he had received from around the world in recognition of his sterling leadership qualities. Here's a glass to GMA for finally registering one move that matters much to the nation's well-being.



DOS Santos crosses the finish line to win the men's race in Sao Paulo, Brazil. AP

Brazilian, Kenyan top year's first big race

SAO PAULO, Brazil—Marilson Gomes dos Santos of Brazil won the 79th annual St. Silvester road race Wednesday, outpacing a field of 13,500 competitors that included defending champion Robert Cheruiyot of Kenya.

Dos Santos ran the 15-km (9.3-mile) course through city streets in 43 minutes, 49 seconds. Countryman Romulo Wagner took second in 43:57, followed closely by Kenya's Martin Lel in 43:57. Cheruiyot, the pre-race favorite at the

event held annually on New Year's Eve in Brazil's biggest city, managed to take fourth place in 44:15. Another Kenyan, Yusuf Songoka, was fifth in 44:20.

Brazil's Paulo Lunkes set the early pace but was passed on the first uphill stretch by a seven-man Kenyan contingent, closely followed by Dos Santos and Wagner.

By the halfway mark, Lunkes and three of the Kenyans had faded, leaving four Kenyans and the two Brazilians running in a tight box with no clear leader.

Dos Santos made his move in the final leg, a taxing uphill stretch, spurring ahead of Lel and Cheruiyot. Lel and Wagner battled for second place down to the tape, with Wagner beating his rival by milliseconds.

"I'm on cloud nine," Dos Santos said. "I can't believe it. I knew the race would be decided on the last uphill stretch. As it approached, and we were still running in a pack, I realized it was now or never and put on some steam."

Earlier Wednesday, Margaret Okayo of Kenya beat a field of 1,500 runners competing under a light drizzle to win the women's St. Silvester road race.

Okayo posted a time of 51:24 in the 15-km (9.3-mile) race. Countrywoman Debora Mengich was second in 52:35, followed by Brazil's Marcia Narloch in 52:49.

Okayo, who won the New York City Marathon in 2001 and 2003, was the pre-race favorite. AP

Everything's easy for James, except the wins

CLEVELAND—Everything has come so easy for LeBron James—except for the victories.

After just two months in the NBA, Cleveland's sensational rookie has been better than advertised, posting impressive statistics and assuming leadership of his team.

Now the teenager wants to turn the Cavaliers into winners.

After going 102-6 during his celebrated high school career in Akron, James is off to a 10-22 start as a pro.

Don't think his confidence is diminished at all, though.

"It's disappointing," James said recently. "But it's a long season, and I still think we can make a run at the playoffs."

Endless attention

Cleveland's No. 1 overall draft pick survived scandals in high school, signed a \$90-million deal with Nike and brought hope to a championship-starved city. And his play on the court so far has been worthy of the endless attention and adulation.

"He's kind of amazing," Cavs coach Paul Silas said. "I knew he was good. I didn't know he was this good."

Just how good?

James—who turned 19 on Tuesday—is currently the only player in the league averaging more than 20 points, six rebounds and six assists. In 15 games in December, he averaged 23.3 points and scored more than 30 points five times.

No player in NBA history, not Michael, not Wilt, not Kareem, not Kobe or Shaq has been this good, this soon.

Dispelling myth

Already, James has modified and improved his game, showing the naysayers he can indeed shoot. And as he stuffs the stat sheet each night, James raises the bar for the future high school-to-NBA jumpers while dispelling the myth that he's simply the product of Madison Avenue hyperbole.

"In a two-month period, he's a legitimate blossoming icon in this

game," said Indiana Pacers coach Rick Carlisle, who has faced James three times this season. "I'm amazed. I felt bad for the kid coming in because I wasn't sure any kid could ever live up to it. He's making that thought seem ridiculous now."

James remains unimpressed by his fast start as a pro.

Losing often

"Statistics don't matter to me," he said. "I'm never satisfied with my game. I'm not disappointed with anything about my game. I just try to go out and play, and what happens, happens."

Too often, what happens is that the Cavaliers lose.

Cleveland has just four more victories than it had at the same point last season on the way to a 17-65 finish. The Cavs dropped their first 13 games away from Gund Arena this season before finally ending a 34-game road losing streak.

But unlike a year ago, when the young Cavs (five players have no college experience) routinely fell behind early and packed it in under coach John Lucas, these Cavaliers fight to the finish for Silas.

Of Cleveland's losses, 16 have been by 10 points or fewer.

There's hope

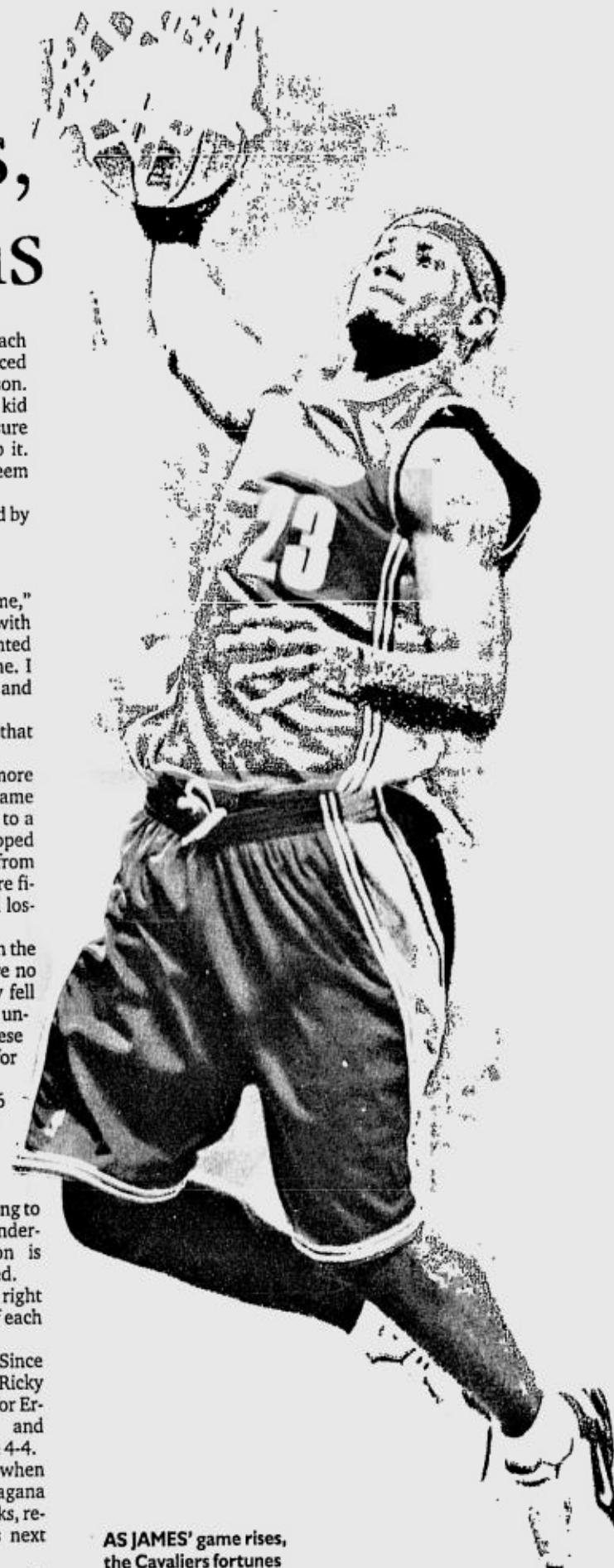
Slowly, the Cavs are learning to win. They're beginning to understand that each possession is priceless and not to be wasted.

But a loss is a loss, and right now, James feels the sting of each one.

There's hope, however. Since the Dec. 16 trade that sent Ricky Davis and others to Boston for Eric Williams, Tony Battie and Kedrick Brown, the Cavs are 4-4.

They'll get another boost when DaJuan Wagner and DeSagana Diop, former first-round picks, return from knee operations next week.

"We're not there yet," Silas said. "But we're getting there. Take a look at us in mid-January." AP



AS JAMES' game rises, the Cavaliers fortunes tumble. AP

Stingy Hornets defense trips Celtics

BOSTON, Massachusetts—Baron Davis scored 29 points and had 10 rebounds to lead the New Orleans Hornets to their third win in as many games over Boston, downing the Celtics, 96-94, on Wednesday.

The Hornets ended their four-game road losing streak with the win in a game that featured 10 lead changes in the second half.

RJ. Brown added 15 points and 14 rebounds for New Orleans, whose tough defense toward the end of the game helped them to victory.

Jiri Welsch led the Celtics with 17 points, as Boston erased a four-point halftime deficit to take the lead numerous times in the second half.

Mike James added 15 points for the Celtics, while Paul Pierce managed just 14 points on 4-from-16 shooting, including just 1-from-10 in the second half.

Pistons 78, Trail Blazers 71

In Auburn Hills, Chauncey Billups scored 22 points to lead the Detroit Pistons to a 78-71 victory over the Portland Trail Blazers.

Ben Wallace had 10 points and hauled down 15 rebounds for the Pistons, while Corliss Williamson came off the bench to score 12 points and pulled down 10 rebounds.

Portland lost on the road for the 11th time in 12 games, despite 17 points from Rasheed Wallace and Zach Randolph's 14 rebounds.

Nets 88, Warriors 70

In East Rutherford, Jason Kidd had 23 points and seven assists

to help the New Jersey Nets defeat the Golden State Warriors, 88-70.

Kenyon Martin added 17 points for New Jersey, who have won 10 of their last 13 games.

Jason Richardson scored 16 points while Erick Dampier added 15 for Golden State.

Clippers 120, Nuggets 104

In Los Angeles, Quentin Richardson scored a career-high 44 points to lead the Clippers to a 120-104 win over the Denver Nuggets.

Elton Brand scored 20 points and had 10 rebounds for Los Angeles.

Voshon Lenard and Andre Miller both had 18 points for the Nuggets, who have lost eight of their last 10 games against the Clippers.

Rockets 80, 76ers 72

In Houston, Yao Ming scored 21 points and had seven rebounds to lead the Rockets to an 80-72 win over the Philadelphia 76ers.

Cuttino Mobley scored 20 points and seven rebounds for Houston, while Steve Francis added 15 points.

Kenny Thomas had 15 points and 12 rebounds for the Sixers, while Greg Buckner added 13 points and 11 rebounds. Reuters

Hopman Cup tussle virtual love match

PERTH, Australia—A first-round showdown between newly engaged tennis stars Lleyton Hewitt and Kim Clijsters will grab center-stage in the AU\$1-million (752,000 US) Hopman Cup starting here Saturday.

Australian favorite Hewitt and Belgian world number two Clijsters go head-to-head in doubles of the prestigious mixed team event next Wednesday, barely a fortnight after revealing plans to tie the knot.

The match is already a sell-out and will be one of the highlights of a tournament which kicks off a series of events building up to the Jan. 19-Feb. 1 Australian Open, the first



CLIJSTERS



HEWITT

Grand Slam of 2004.

"We're calling it the love match around here," tournament director Paul McNamee

said of the eagerly anticipated contest between Clijsters and Hewitt.

"Tickets for it sold out almost immediately. Everyone wants to see it. Kim is very popular with Australian crowds." McNamee said the match would also be pivotal for the competition with the winning mixed doubles team likely to secure a place in the final.

Clijsters is using the Hopman Cup, played on a medium-pace Rebound Ace surface similar to that used in the Australian Open, as a springboard for the Open as she continues her quest for a first Grand Slam singles tournament win. AP

No quick recovery for Malone

EL SEGUNDO, California—Karl Malone is probably headed to the injured list for the first time in his outstanding 19-year career.

And Shaquille O'Neal will likely be fined as punishment for not informing the Los Angeles Lakers he was missing practice Wednesday.

Malone, the NBA's second-leading career scorer behind Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, sprained the



MALONE

medial collateral ligament in his right knee Dec. 21 in the first quarter of a game against Phoenix and hasn't played since.

Recovery hasn't gone as quickly as hoped.

The 40-year-old Malone missed 10 games

before this season—six due to injuries or illness and four because of suspensions—and never sat out more than two games in any one season. AP

Athens throws grand party to welcome Olympic year

ATHENS, Greece—Fireworks streaked over the 2,500-year-old Parthenon on Thursday in New Year celebrations marking the final stage of preparations for the Athens Olympics.

Thousands of Athenians of all ages crowded into a central square in front of parliament to join the street party featuring a light show and performances from Greek and international artists, as well as a dance troupe from Italy.

Acrobats on stilts and roaming brass bands added to the festive atmosphere.

"In less than eight months the Olympic games will return to Athens," IOC president Jacques Rogge said in an end-of-year message.

"There will be difficult days ahead... (but)

the International Olympic Committee embraces the progress of Olympic preparation with its complete trust," Rogge said. "We would like to thank the Greek people, Athens 2004 organizers, the Greek government and all those who volunteer their help."

Rogge has kept constant watch over Athens' troubled preparations, as Greek organizers in 2003 overcame major construction and planning delays and struggled to stick to the IOC's timetable.

In August, Athens is set to welcome some 17,000 athletes and team representatives, 8,000 sporting officials, 3,000 judges and referees, 20,000 journalists and more than 2 million visitors. AP



GO, GO, GOLIATH: Hawaiian-born former sumo wrestler Taro Akebono (left) and former NFL player Bob Sapp fight in a K-1 bout in Nagoya, Japan, Saturday. Sapp won by technical knockout. Akebono, Japan's first foreign-born sumo champion, made his debut in K-1, a violent karate-based combat sport. AP

NY Yankees lose pitcher Wells, too

SAN DIEGO, California—Left-handed pitcher David Wells has signed a one-year contract with the San Diego Padres, the team said on Wednesday.

Wells, 40, is a San Diego native who returns home to pitch for the Padres in the first season in their new ballpark.

The Padres say Wells will make \$1.25 million in base salary, with incentives that could bump that total up to \$7 million if he can stay healthy.

Wells had back surgery in early December after developing problems during the World Series with the New York Yankees.

Wells is the fourth pitcher to leave the Yankees, following Roger Clemens, Andy Pettitte and Jeff Weaver from the beaten World Series contenders. The Yankees lost in six games to the Florida Marlins. Reuters

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3 FANTASTIC MAN	3 CAPTAIN BARBELL	3 CAPTAIN BARBELL
4 CAPTAIN BARBELL	4 BRIDAL SHOWER	4 MANO PO 2
5 MALIKMATA	5 FANTASTIC MAN	5 BRIDAL SHOWER
6 CRYING LADIES	6 GAGAMBOY	6 GAGAMBOY
7 GAGAMBOY	7 MALIKMATA	7 BRIDAL SHOWER
8 FILIPINAS	8 BRIDAL SHOWER	8 CRYING LADIES
	9 FILIPINAS	9 MALIKMATA
	10 GAGAMBOY	10 FANTASTIC MAN
		11 GAGAMBOY
		12 FILIPINAS
SM CITY CEBU 231-0876	SM SOUTHMALL 316-0011	SM CINEMA TUTUBAN 291-0322
1 BRIDAL SHOWER	1 FANTASTIC MAN	1 CAPTAIN BARBELL
2 FANTASTIC MAN	2 FILIPINAS	2 CRYING LADIES
3 GAGAMBOY	3 CRYING LADIES	3 FANTASTIC MAN
4 FILIPINAS	4 CAPTAIN BARBELL	4 BRIDAL SHOWER
5 CRYING LADIES	5 GAGAMBOY	
6 MANO PO 2	6 BRIDAL SHOWER	
7 MALIKMATA	7 MALIKMATA	
8 CAPTAIN BARBELL	8 FANTASTIC MAN	
	9 CAPTAIN BARBELL	
	10 MANO PO 2	
SM CITY BACOR 417-5554	SM CITY FAIRVIEW 515-9143	SM CITY ILOILO 212-4422
1 BRIDAL SHOWER	1 FANTASTIC MAN	1 MALIKMATA
2 FILIPINAS	2 GAGAMBOY	2 RESERVED
3 FANTASTIC MAN	3 CRYING LADIES	3 BRIDAL SHOWER
4 MANO PO 2	4 CAPTAIN BARBELL	4 GAGAMBOY
5 CAPTAIN BARBELL	5 GAGAMBOY	5 CRYING LADIES
6 MALIKMATA	6 FANTASTIC MAN	6 MANO PO 2
7 GAGAMBOY	7 GAGAMBOY	7 RESERVED
8 CRYING LADIES	8 CAPTAIN BARBELL	8 CAPTAIN BARBELL
	9 CRYING LADIES	
	10 BRIDAL SHOWER	
	11 FILIPINAS	
	12 FILIPINAS	
SM CITY PAMPANGA 212-0215	SM CITY DAYAO 257-1512	SM CITY MANILA 523-2441
1 FANTASTIC MAN	1 MANO PO 2	1 BRIDAL SHOWER
2 CAPTAIN BARBELL	2 CAPTAIN BARBELL	2 FANTASTIC MAN
3 BRIDAL SHOWER	3 FANTASTIC MAN	3 GAGAMBOY
4 GAGAMBOY	4 BRIDAL SHOWER	4 MANO PO 2
5 MALIKMATA	5 CRYING LADIES	5 MALIKMATA
6 CRYING LADIES	6 MALIKMATA	6 CRYING LADIES
	7 BRIDAL SHOWER	7 BRIDAL SHOWER
	8 FILIPINAS	8 FILIPINAS
	9 CAPTAIN BARBELL	9 CAPTAIN BARBELL
	10 GAGAMBOY	10 GAGAMBOY
	11 CRYING LADIES	11 CRYING LADIES
	12 MALIKMATA	12 MALIKMATA
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1 CRYING LADIES	1 BRIDAL SHOWER	1 BRIDAL SHOWER
2 CAPTAIN BARBELL	2 CRYING LADIES	2 CRYING LADIES
3 MALIKMATA	3 CAPTAIN BARBELL	3 CAPTAIN BARBELL
4 BRIDAL SHOWER	4 MANO PO 2	4 MANO PO 2
	5 FANTASTIC MAN	5 FANTASTIC MAN
	6 FILIPINAS	6 FILIPINAS
	7 BRIDAL SHOWER	7 BRIDAL SHOWER
	8 CRYING LADIES	8 CRYING LADIES
	9 CAPTAIN BARBELL	9 CAPTAIN BARBELL
	10 GAGAMBOY	10 GAGAMBOY
	11 CRYING LADIES	11 CRYING LADIES
	12 MALIKMATA	12 MALIKMATA
SM BICUTAN 212-0215	SM CITY LUCENA 212-4422	
1 GAGAMBOY	1 CAPTAIN BARBELL	
2 MALIKMATA	2 GAGAMBOY	
3 MANO PO 2	3 CRYING LADIES	
4 CAPTAIN BARBELL	4 GAGAMBOY	
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4 GAGAMBOY		

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2 MANO PO 2 11:10, 1:50, 4:30, 7:10, 9:50	5 FANTASTIC MAN 10:35, 12:50, 3:05, 5:20, 7:35, 9:50
3 CAPTAIN BARBELL 11:05, 1:50, 4:35, 7:20, 10:00	6 FILIPINAS 10:20, 12:40, 3:00, 5:20, 7:40, 10:00

7 CRYING LADIES 11:10, 1:45, 4:20, 6:55, 9:30	9 FILIPINAS 2:30, 4:50, 7:10, 9:30
8 MALIKMATA 2:45, 5:00, 7:15, 9:30	10 CRYING LADIES 2:15, 4:50, 7:25, 10:00

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3 FILIPINAS - 10:10, 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 9:50
4 MALIKMATA - 10:40, 12:50, 3:00, 5:10, 9:50
5 CAPTAIN BARBELL - 10:15, 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 9:50
6 HOMECOMING - 11:00, 1:10, 3:20, 5:30, 7:40, 10:00
7 CRYING LADIES - 10:10, 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 9:50

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2 HOMECOMING
3 MANO PO 2
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6 CAPTAIN BARBELL
7 FANTASTIC MAN
8 FILIPINAS

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3 MALIKMATA
4 CRYING LADIES
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6 MANO PO 2
7 HOMECOMING
8 MANO PO 2

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4 FANTASTIC MAN

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CRYING LADIES 4	FANTASTIC MAN
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HOMECOMING 2	CAPTAIN BARBELL
FANTASTIC MAN 3	CRYING LADIES
CAPTAIN BARBELL 4	MANO PO 2
MALIKMATA 5	FILIPINAS
ELF 6	HOMECOMING

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MANO PO 2 1	MANO PO 2
FILIPINAS 2	FILIPINAS
CAPTAIN BARBELL 3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
FANTASTIC MAN 4	FANTASTIC MAN
MALIKMATA 5	MALIKMATA
ELF 6	CRYING LADIES

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MANO PO 2 1	MANO PO 2
FILIPINAS 2	FILIPINAS
CAPTAIN BARBELL 3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
FANTASTIC MAN 4	FANTASTIC MAN
MALIKMATA 5	MALIKMATA
ELF 6	CRYING LADIES

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DID YOU KNOW...

Rumored lovers and telenovela "Basta't Kasama Kita" stars Robin Padilla and Judy Ann Santos were together at the Power Plant Mall in Rockwell, Makati City three days before Christmas. They wore jackets—his brown, hers green—and shades. Also seen at the same mall on the same day was Rachel Lobangco, with kids.

BEST PICTURE

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DIRECTED BY **TONY Y. REYES, DGPI**
OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL 2003

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NOW SHOWING !

Record-high ticket sales

LOS ANGELES—Brisk business for reigning box-office champion "The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King" and several new releases helped drive ticket sales to a record high for the Christmas weekend in North America, according to studio estimates.

The third installment in the lucrative "Rings" trilogy earned \$51.2 million for the three days beginning Dec. 26, driving its 12-day total to \$223.7 million, or 12-percent higher than where its predecessor, "The Two Towers" was at the same time last year. Additionally, the new film has already grossed \$268.4 million in 38 foreign countries.

The Steve Martin family comedy "Cheaper by the Dozen," a remake of the 1950 film that starred Clifton Webb and Myrna Loy, performed the best of the four new wide releases, all of which opened on Christmas Day. It grabbed the No. 2 slot with a better-than-expected \$28.2 million for the weekend. Its four-day total was \$36.4 million.

The film cost a little under \$40 million. The Civil War drama "Cold Mountain" opened at No. 3 with \$14.5 million for the weekend, and \$19 million for the four days.

The critically acclaimed Anthony Minghella adaptation of the Charles Frazier novel stars Nicole Kidman, Renee Zellweger and Jude Law.

Reuters

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Absolutely the most enjoyable film among all entries! — Billy Balbastro, Abante
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"Bridal Shower" succeeds in making us roar with laughter. A must-see! — Mario Bautista, People's J

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3 MALIKMATA	3 MALIKMATA	3 FANTASTIC MAN	3 FILIPINAS	3 MANO PO 2
4 CAPTAIN BARBEL	4 CAPTAIN BARBEL	4 CAPTAIN BARBEL	4 MALIKMATA	4 MALIKMATA
5 CRYING LADIES	5 CRYING LADIES	5 CAPTAIN BARBEL	5 CAPTAIN BARBEL	5 MANO PO 2

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Araneta Center ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

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Ali 1	MANO PO 2
Ali 2	FILIPINAS
Ali 3	CAPTAIN BARBEL
Ali 4	CRYING LADIES
Ali 5	MALIKMATA
Ali 6	FANTASTIC MAN
Ali 7	HOME COMING

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ODEON-2	BUKID AY BASA / KASIBULAN
ROBEN	BOLD STAR
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN NO LANGIT KO
TIMES	SPY 100% KATAPUSAN

QUEZON CITY

ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAGIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
CORONET A	MALIKMATA
CORONET B	A MAN APART
QUEZON-1	BERTUD NG PUTIK
REMAR	X-MEN 2
REMAR-2	BOLD STAR

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C	

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CINEMA-9 (DTS)	LOST ISLAND
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CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
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(LAS PINAS)	OUT OF TIME
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Felicitous combination of plus factors in 'Crying Ladies'

WHY, some viewers ask, did "Crying Ladies" romp off with the Best Picture, Best Director and other top plums in the 2003 Metro film-fest?

First, it has one of the freshest concepts among the festival entries. It isn't about the usual glamorous and exquisitely suffering heroines of high-strung movie dramas. It's about three losers whose "ordinary" lives turn out to be every bit as fascinating as the emotionally over-the-top stories of the grandest divas of local TV-film melodramas.

The unexpected casting is a major attraction—Sharon Cuneta being cast as a hustler

VIEWFINDER



Nestor U. Torre

and ex-con really comes out of left field, and makes people curious enough to see the movie.

It's also quite impressive that "Megastar" Sharon would agree to play an offbeat role in a "small" film, but she and producer Tony Gloria go back a long way, so the casting coup wasn't all that difficult to effect.

Another major surprise is Gloria's decision to give writer-director Mark Meily his big movie break. But again, this turns out to be not all that improbable since Gloria believes in encouraging new talents, and Meily and his cinematographer-wife Lee have done com-

mercials for Gloria's Uniloutfit.

In any case, the felicitous combination of innovative producer, young filmmaker and major star has made "Crying Ladies" emerge as the Metro filmfest's best bet, so everyone should see it.

This goes double for people who keep bemoaning the local film industry's self-destructive predictability. Here's a movie that effectively debunks that cynical view, so the least naysayers can do is to view Meily's movie.

Which is not to say that it is a glisteningly perfect gem of cinema. Truth to tell, the movie initiates more moves than it finishes, and Sharon's "deglamorized" portrayal stops short of completely subsuming the Megastar's stellar persona in the protagonist's "loser" character.

There's also the fact that the "mourner for hire" syndrome that the film builds its story on isn't really as prevalent today as it used to be, so it lacks contemporary resonance.

And director Meily stages mostly small scenes that don't build and complicate as much as they should as the movie progresses to its climax—which makes the film not quite as convincingly cumulative as it aspires to be.

Still, the movie has plus points to involve and delight viewers, like Hilda Koronel's "stage mother" and ex-starlet characterization, which deserves the Best Supporting Actress plum that Koronel received. And child actor Julio Pacheco's performance is pleasingly natural and bereft of the usual p-cute antics and gambits of most local kiddie performers.

But the movie's best suit is its relative freshness and daring. If, aside from winning awards, it also makes good money at the tills, it could encourage the production of other unconventional projects.

This would further enliven the local movie scene, give breaks to other deserving new filmmakers, and provide veteran stars with the scenic challenges to "stretch" their capacities as film artists.

Keep those innovative movies coming, folks!

Homecoming concert

Anna Fegi returns to her home province of Cebu for a special show, "Anna Fegi: The Homecoming Concert," at 8 p.m., on Jan. 17 at Theatro Casino, Waterfront Hotel, Lahug, Cebu City.

The show coincides with the Sinulog Festival, and continues the musical collaboration between Anna and concert director Manolet Garcia, which started in 2002 with shows in Kalibo, Aklan and Boracay.

Anna and Manolet have also worked together in "Voices" at Philamlife theater, "This Is the Moment" at Hard Rock Cafe, and "Christmas Zong" at Fort Bonifacio Square.

Manolet is pleased to have witnessed Anna's transformation into the comfortable and confident performer she is today, and is happy to have contributed to her development.

"Anna Fegi: The Homecoming Concert" is produced and directed by Garcia, and pre-

sented by Casino Filipino Cebu and Star Cruises. Anna can be reached at 721-0801.

Cartoon premiere

Jan. 10 at 8 p.m., "Jonny's Global Impact." Join Jonny Quest, his friends and dog Bandit in an all-new feature-length adventure. To defeat Dr. Zin and his insect-like minions, Jonny must travel to a mechanical asteroid. Mustering all of their skills, his teammates have to ward off legions of evil giant insects!

Two-Day Film School

Veteran US film instructor Dov Simens will bring his popular Two-Day Film School to the Philippines—on Jan. 24 and 25 at the Expo, Greenbelt 1, Ayala Center Makati.

US film people who've taken Simens' two-day course include Quentin Tarantino, Spike Lee, Guy Ritchie, Robert Rodriguez, Baz Luhrman and Will Smith. The course is popular because it teaches the basics of making a feature film on a small budget.

The first day's sessions go into camera shots, lenses, film stock, story boarding, scheduling, hiring talent and casting, purchasing scripts, contracts and agreements, light and sound, hiring production crew, budgeting tricks, the Hollywood system, directing actors and the camera, renting equipment, post production, musical scoring, screenplay writing, etc.

Day Two focuses on financing and distribution, filmfests, marketing, publicity, foreign sales, video and cable deals, securing bank loans, and other related topics.

We trust that Simens will adjust some of his teaching points to the local filmmaking situation, some elements of which are very different from Hollywood's way of doing things.

Simens got his own big break in the movies when he worked on the films of Roger Corman. In 1986, UCLA asked him to teach a class on low-budget filmmaking. Soon after, USC and NYU followed suit.

In 1989, Simens founded the Hollywood Film Institute, where his Two-Day Film School soon became one of the most popular courses.

For more details about Simens' Jan. 24 and 25 sessions, call 924-1546, 0917-5289018, or e-mail manilatour2004@yahoo.com.

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An official entry to 2003 Metro Manila Film Festival

David Gates show opens at Big Dome on Jan. 20

TODAY, three decades after the Bread's best years, their hits—including "If," "Make It With You," "Everything I Own," "Aubrey" and "Diary"—are still sung and played all over the world.

Bread, led by David Gates, vocalist and chief songwriter,

was formed in 1968. The group's first album yielded their only No. 1 song, "Make It With You." But this was followed by 10 Top 10 hits, including "Everything I Own," "Baby I'm a Want

You," "If," and "Guitar Man" all of which sold 17 million albums worldwide and made Bread a legend. When the group disbanded in 1973, David opted to move on by putting

SHOW TIME



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out five solo albums that produced eight singles up to the next decade, including "The Goodbye Girl."

By the '80s, David had semi-retired from the music scene and concentrated on his running his ranch, but his music lived on in remakes by such artists as Julio Iglesias (a Spanish-English version of "If") and Boy George ("Everything I Own," ska-style).

In the '90s, after building a recording studio in his ranch, Gates started writing songs again.

Last year, he released "David Gates The Songbook—A Lifetime of Work." David Gates performs at the Araneta Coliseum on Jan. 20 in "The Voice of Bread: David Gates Asia Tour 2004," produced by JP Entertainment Productions and organized by Widescope Entertainment.

Tickets at P2,000, P1,500, P1,000, P500, and P200 are available at all SM Ticketnet outlets at SM department stores and at the Araneta Coliseum box office.

For details, call 911-5555 or 899-2812, or log on to www.ticketnet.com.ph.

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BY JESS ABRERA



BY P.M. JUNG



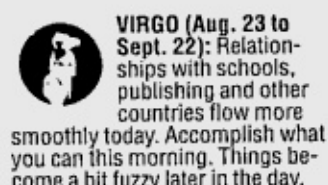
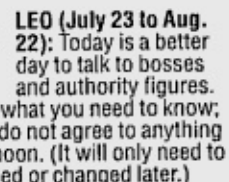
BY PATRICK McDONNELL



BY ROBERT MAGNUSON



Birthdate of: Gabrielle Carteris, actress; Cuba Gooding, Jr., actor; Tave Dinos, actor



By Diane C. Baldwin
Columbia, MD

9 Susan of *L.A.

Thursday's Puzzle Solved

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in a curious way, old travel plans might be triggered or set in motion once again.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Try to find some solitude today. You have a lot to think about, and so you should give yourself space to do this. (You've been working too hard lately.)

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Conversations with siblings and relatives are lighthearted and enjoyable today! You feel generous to others and vice versa. (Good.)

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BY IOMIKE TEIDO



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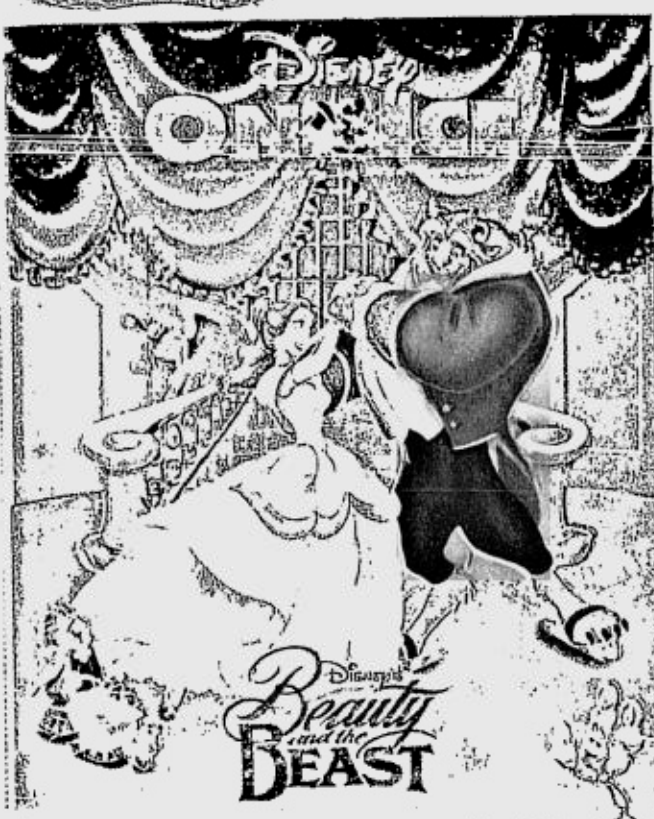
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Bong: A senator's pay can't support a family

He'll keep on making movies if he wins

By Nini Valera and Marinel R. Cruz

THE SUCCESS of the Metro Manila Film Festival entry and Bong Revilla starrer "Captain Barbell" was what made the actor and former Cavite governor decide to run for senator in 2004.

Bong, 37, said he will file his certificate of candidacy for the senatorial race on Jan. 5.

He said "Captain Barbell's" success at the box office had indicated the support of his public for his political career.

But he vowed he would still make movies even if he wins. He pointed out that he would not be able to support his family on a senator's pay check.

"Show biz is my bread and butter," he insisted. "I don't want to be hypocritical about it and say that I'm willing to give that up. For as long as you do your job well as a politician, I don't see any problem or conflict even if you make movies as an actor."

"Besides, I have never been accused of graft and corruption even when I was governor of Cavite. I do not want to be a corrupt politician. I would rather make money on movies than on corruption."

The actor, who is also the head of the Videogram Regulatory Board, explained to Inquirer Entertainment in a cell phone interview that he would be considered "automatically resigned" from the VRB once he files his certificate for candidacy.

"I would not have been Bong Revilla if not for the fans," he said. "Ever since naman, I have always been a movie actor. Even when I entered politics, I still did movies. But as a politician, I'm here to help people, not to make kurakot."

"If you think of it, my life as a movie star is wonderful already. I have nothing more to ask for. But it's different when you're helping people as a public servant."

Feeling the pulse

Bong will be running under the Lakas-CMD, President Macapagal-Arroyo's party.

"As early as the first week of December, I was already in her shortlist," said Bong, who refused to confirm in earlier interviews his decision to run for senator.

"We already talked about my candidacy," he said. "(But) it took a while for me to agree (to run for senator) because I had to consult my wife (actress Lani Mercado) and my kids. I also had to feel the pulse of the people. Ayokong magkamali (I don't want to make a mistake)."

He said that if he wins, he will focus on improving education, health, environment and the peace and order situation in the country.

"I'm no CPA," he said. "I have no Ph D," Bong said. "What I have is a heart that beats for the people."

A year's work

He said the entertainment industry would benefit from his senatorial victory.

"Automatic na 'yun," he said. "When I'm a senator, I can do more to stop piracy."

He cites his achievements in the VRB, saying that under his helm the body had reduced video and record piracy by about 70 percent. He said that to date, the VRB had confiscated and destroyed P5.6 billion of pirated products and replicating equipment confiscated during raids.

"That was only for a year's work," he said. "Imagine what I can do if I win as senator."

Bong's filmfest movie "Captain Barbell," directed by Mac Alejandre and produced by Premier Productions, is the top grosser this year in the Metro Manila Film Festival. The fantasy-adventure film, the third remake of the Mars Ravelo komiks super hero, has reportedly earned more than P40 million since it opened in theaters on Christmas Day.

But the effects-laden film came away empty-handed after the filmfest's awards rites last Saturday.

Same time next year

"Things happen," said Bong, who admitted that he was hoping for a few trophies in the technical department. "I was not hoping to win for best actor. I would have been the first to walk out of the venue if they gave me that award. But at least, I thought the movie would win some technical awards."

"But that's okay," he added. "It also happened to me last year. A film recorded on mono beat my Dolby Digital 5.2 sound for



"CAPTAIN BARBELL." "I'm no CPA, I don't have a Ph D."

"Panda."

Bong was referring to how the Rudy Fernandez starrer "Hula Mo, Huli Ko" was given the best sound award in last year's filmfest. Rudy's film was recorded on mono.

"The jurors should be more knowledgeable in the technical aspects of film," Bong added. "But I still respect their decision."

Bong conceded that the effects on "Captain Barbell" could have been done using higher technology. But that would have jacked up the already bloated production cost of the movie.

"Maybe in the next festival, we can afford to go all the way," said Bong.

GMA Network one of top 10 RP firms, says Review 200

THE FAR Eastern Economic Review has named GMA Network Inc. as "one of the 10 leading Philippine companies," making the broadcast firm join the elite group of Review 200 Asian companies for the second consecutive year.

GMA Network is now No. 9 in the Far Eastern Economic Review list, a notch higher than the company's 2002 ranking of 10.

ABS-CBN is in 10th place.

GMA Network also made improvements in the sub-categories, moving up to fifth place for being "Innovative in Responding to Customer Needs," from sixth place last year.

It also made a remarkable leap to the Top 5

in "Long-Term Vision" from its eighth-place standing last year.

This year's honors reaffirm the GMA Network's efforts to improve its programming, renewing its commitment to be the No. 1 broadcast company since its chair and CEO, lawyer Felipe Gozon, took over the network's management three years ago, according to a GMA statement.

GMA Network has since improved the efficiency of its operations.

In 2002, GMA registered a higher net income than its biggest rival and expects to do the same for 2003 after posting record-breaking sales.

MTRCB RATING: **PG-13** Children below 13 yrs. old will be allowed if accompanied by a parent or adult

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DID YOU KNOW...

Filmfest best supporting actor Victor Neri and actress-Quezon City Councilor Aiko Melendez couldn't hide their sweetness to each other during the victory party at the Manila Peninsula for the cast of "Filipinas" last Saturday night, following the awards show. Among the guests were fashion icon Ino Sotto, who designed the clothes the outfits that Maricel Soriano and Victor wore that night.

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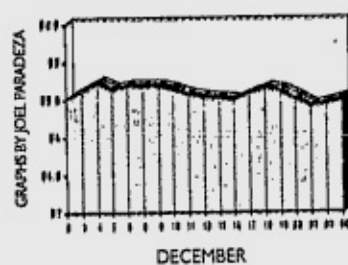
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BUSINESS

'03 economic growth seen at 4.5-5.5%

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As of 5 p.m., Dec. 30, 2003

GOLD: \$413.80-414.30
per ounce Hong Kong, Dec. 30, 2003

STOCK MARKET

Stocks end 2003 up 42%

LOCAL stocks last Tuesday succumbed to profit-taking after a creeping yearend rally, but fresh optimism for the new year remained as the main-share index ended 2003 with a 42-percent gain.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index lost 8.33 points last Tuesday to close at 1,442.37 before the market paused for another long holiday break.

Despite the slight drop in the Phslix, gainers still outnumbered losers 36 to 16, with 43 stocks unchanged.

The all-shares index was still up by 5.28 points at 874.78.

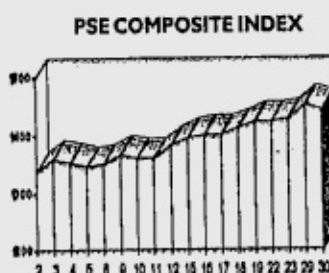
"There are still a lot of stocks which moved up due to window-dressing. Look at JG Summit (Holdings)," said Eagle Equities president Joseph Roxas.

For the full-year, however, AB Capital Securities analyst Jose Vistan said the 42-percent gain was a testament to how well the economy fared despite various local and global shocks.

Local stocks started slow in 2003 amid uncertainties over the Iraq war, the outbreak of the SARS killer virus and the global slump in the early part of the year.

Foreign funds likewise trickled back to the local bourse in the latter part of the year.

Roxas said that when trading resumes on Monday, activity would likely be slow but should pick up after the first week. **Doris C. Dumlaog**



(See stock market report on Page B2)

By Michelle V. Remo

THE DEPARTMENT of Trade and Industry has estimated that the country's economy, as measured by the gross domestic product (GDP), grew by 4.5 percent to 5.5 percent in 2003.

Trade Undersecretary Adrian Cristobal, who is also officer-in-charge of the DTI, said the trade department attributed the robust GDP growth figure this year to the general recovery of the global economy.

"(2004) will be a better year for us," Cristobal said during a yearend press briefing, adding that the expected increase in exports and investments would be the primary drivers of the economy this year.

The 4.5- to 5.5-percent GDP growth estimated by the DTI matches the forecast made by the National Economic and Development Authority and the Department of Finance. It is also higher than the 4.2- to 5.2-percent ex-

pected GDP growth for 2003.

Trade Undersecretary Thomas Aquino said the expected growth in the economies of the United States and Japan, which are the biggest foreign markets for Philippine exports, would also help propel the local economy this year.

He added that the increased access to more markets in the Asean region would also help boost the country's export revenue.

Aquino added that the trade department expected the entry of big-ticket projects this year, which would include expansion plans of major exporters.

The DTI expects investments in 2004 to grow by 5-6 percent, said Cristobal.

Bangko Sentral closely watching NPLs of 9 banks

NINE commercial banks are being closely watched by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas for their high volume of non-performing loans and low level of provisioning, which could spell trouble not only for those banks but for the entire banking system if not immediately addressed.

The banks, whose names are being withheld by the INQUIRER, were tasked to take remedial measures to reduce the level of their bad accounts and provide provisioning that will match the BSP's recommended valuation reserve plus the required 1 percent and 5 percent general provision for loan losses and restructured loans, respectively.

Four of the nine banks were being monitored for exceeding the industry average NPL ratio and for posting a low coverage ratio.

The five others have the same problems al-

though the levels of their deficiencies were lesser.

These banks were also advised by the BSP to bring down their level of foreclosed assets to within the industry average.

Bad loans or NPLs are accounts whose principals or interests remained unpaid for at least 90 days after maturity.

The coverage ratio, computed by the increase in NPLs against the movement in loan loss reserves, indicates a bank's ability to prevent defaults. The higher the coverage ratio, the better for the bank.

As of October, the banking sector's NPL ratio stood at 15.16 percent of total loans from 14.49 percent in September while coverage ratio stood at 50.07 percent from 51 percent a month ago. The industry's loan loss reserves were at P124.8 billion as of September.

As of November 2003, investments registered with the Board of Investments and the Philippine Economic Zone Authority stood at P54.66 billion, 30 percent higher than the 2002 level.

In the third quarter of 2003, the country's GDP grew by 4.4 percent largely on account of the expansion in the agriculture and services sector.

The 4.4-percent GDP growth in the third quarter last year was higher than the government's projection of 3.8- to 4.3-percent for the three-month period.

The agriculture sector grew by 5.5 percent in the quarter, which was higher than the 4.2-percent expansion target for the sector. The services sector, meanwhile, expanded by 5.5 percent, which was higher than the 5.1-percent growth target.

The National Economic and Development Authority said the third-quarter GDP would likely help the country achieve the low-end growth target of 4.2 percent for the whole of 2003.

Dev't assistance disbursement improves to 95%

By Doris C. Dumlaog

THE PHILIPPINES' capacity to absorb funds earmarked by international donors for official development assistance has significantly improved in 2003, with the disbursement rate jumping to 95 percent from only 76 percent a year ago.

"We have spent 95 percent of the scheduled loan disbursement for January to September on projects," Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri announced.

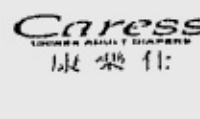
In the past, the country's ODA disbursement was hampered by either poor project implementation or lack of counterpart funds from the government. This has cost commitment fees which were paid whether the projects were on track or not. In some cases, the country's failure to come up with counterpart funding led to the cancella-

DEV'T/B2



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In our search for new ways to serve you better, we at J.S. Unitrade Merchandise Inc. and East Valley Enterprise, Inc. are moving to a new, more accessible address. We're now at the 31st floor, Raffles Corporate Centre, Emerald Avenue, Ortigas Center, Pasig City, Metro Manila, Philippines. Our new contact numbers: Trunkline - (632) 916-1111, (fax) Sales - (632) 916-5592, Marketing - (632) 916-5593, Accounting - (632) 916-5594, Administration - (632) 916-5595. See you at our new home!



FIRST SLP HOLDINGS, INC.

UNITRADE MERCHANDISE, INC.

EAST VALLEY ENTERPRISE, INC.

Ayala's Manila Water sees P1.1B in net income for 2003

By Christine A. Gaylican

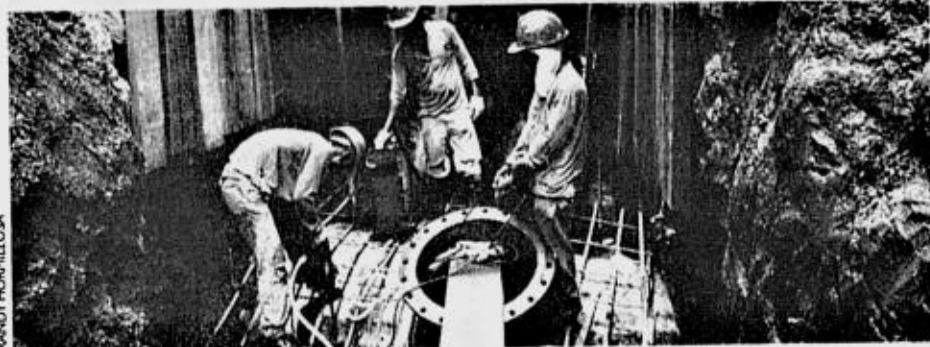
THE MANILA Water Co. Inc., the water distribution arm of the Ayala group, said its net income for 2003 should hit P1.1 billion, double the previous year's P550 million.

Manila Water president Antonino Aquino said in an interview that the net income growth could be attributed to improved operations, entry of new customers and the tariff adjustment.

Aquino disclosed that over the past five years, Manila Water has been able to trim its operating expenses by about 20 percent.

"The financial performance of Manila Water has been improving steadily over the last four years. From a net loss in 1997, we were able to strike a profit in 2001 of P176 million," Aquino disclosed.

He said Manila Water's revenue had consistently grown from P960 million in 1998 to P1.565 billion in 2001 and outpaced expenditures since 1999.



MANILA Water reduced losses from pilferage and busted pipes, thus, boosting revenue.

Manila Water's revenue in 2002 hit P1.5 billion, exceeding expenditures placed at P1.26 billion, he said.

Aquino said Manila Water has been able to chalk up gains as it has managed to contain losses from leakage, pilferage and busted meters and pipes, also referred to as "non-revenue water" or NRWs.

Manila Water is the water distribution concessionaire for the East zone. The concessionaire for the other half is Maynilad Water Services Inc., a part of the Lopez group of companies.

The two companies took over the century-old Metro Manila water distribution system formerly managed by the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System.

Napocor studies use of local coal

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE NATIONAL Power Corp. is looking at the possibility of buying blends of imported and local coal from domestic suppliers to make fuel procurement more flexible.

Napocor president Rogelio Murga said in an interview the power firm could veer away from securing its coal supplies from foreign suppliers and traders in favor of local firms.

"We are soliciting proposals from PNOC Exploration Corp. and Semirara Mining Corp. (SMC) on how this could be made possible," Murga said.

The official explained that if the local suppliers were up to the job, they could import coal themselves and then blend it with their own produce.

He said this was in line with the possible "derating" of coal-fired power plants to take in lower-grade coal.

Last November, PNOC-EC president Rufino Bomasang said the state-run firm had partnered with SMC in efforts to expand the market for local coal.

Bomasang said the cooperation was aimed at increasing the sale of Semirara coal to local cement plants.

Cement makers are heavy consumers of electricity, many of which have their own power plants, usually coal-fired.

SMC vice president Francisco Aragon said the country's only major coal producer expected production to go up by 50 percent this year due to its drive to expand its market.

First Pacific eyes Thailand, Indonesia for expansion

By Abigail L. Ho

THE IMPROVING economy of Thailand and the low wireless penetration rate in Indonesia made the two countries the primary potential locations of First Pacific Co. Ltd.'s regional telecommunications expansion efforts.

First Pacific managing director Manuel Pangilinan said he had been making the rounds of the region to look for good investment locations for telecommunications.

The Hong Kong-based conglomerate is now pursuing a two-pronged regional expansion strategy anchored on telecommunications and food. Its telecommunications strategy is hinged on Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., while its food strategy is centered on Indonesian noodle maker Indofood Sukses Makmur Tbk.

Pangilinan said that for the telecommunications aspect of First Pacific's regional expansion, Thailand and Indonesia looked like the most attractive market to get into.

"Thailand is a high growth economy, while Indonesia's penetration rate is where we were in 1998 and 1999. They're nearing the inflection point so it's a good time to look at this market," he said.

First Pacific already has interests in two telecommunications firms in Asia: a 24.47-percent stake in PLDT and a 49-percent shareholding in India's Escotel Mobile

Communications Ltd.

In an earlier interview, Pangilinan said First Pacific's regional telecommunications expansion would involve cellular phone operations as this was where the growth potential was.

"Cellular phone companies are doing well. Those in Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia are doing well, and even those in India and China. DoCoMo in Japan is also doing well," he said.

Here in the Philippines, PLDT's cellular subsidiary Smart Communications Inc. ranks as one of the most profitable companies in the country.

In the first nine months of the year, Smart continued to fuel PLDT's overall strong performance, chalking up a net income of P10.3 billion, up 212 percent from last year.

Smart also remained the country's biggest cellular service provider with more than 12 million subscribers as of end-October, including the global system for mobile communications (GSM) subscribers of sister firm Pilipino Telephone Corp.'s Talk 'N Text brand.

The introduction of lower denomination reloads via Smart Load also helped arrest the company's churn or disconnection rate. From 3.4 percent in the first nine months of 2002, churn rate dropped to only 2.9 percent in the same period this year.

Smart, as of end-September, had a 58-percent share of the local mobile phone market.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

STOCKS	(As of December 30, 2003)				VOLUME
	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank, Inc.	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	10,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	17.25	17.75	17.25	17.75	186,000
Bank of the Phil. Islands	47	47	46.5	46.5	673,200
Chiyata Savings Bank	16	16	16	16	5,000
Equitable PCI Bank, Inc.	34.5	34.5	33.5	33.5	80,400
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.56	0.56	0.5	0.52	17,000,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	26.5	27.5	26.5	27.5	1,397,100
Philippine National Bank	24	24.25	24	24.25	1,310,000
Philippine Trust Co.	27.5	27.5	27.5	27.5	1,000
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	12.5	12.5	12.5	12.5	20,300
Security Bank Corp.	16.5	17.25	16.5	17.25	173,900
Union Bank of the Phil.	27	27	26	26	11,200
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
ATR Kim Eng Fin. Corp.	2.4	2.4	2.3	2.4	43,000
First Abacus Financial	0.5	0.51	0.5	0.51	130,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	1750	1750	1750	1750	780
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.34	1.34	1.34	1.34	62,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	200	200	200	200	500
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1350	1370	1350	1365	6,050
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	25	25	25	25	21,000
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.7	0.7	0.68	0.7	1,080,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	865	865	845	860	67,400
People's Inc.	0.97	0.99	0.97	0.97	380,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.043	0.043	0.043	0.043	2,000,000
SAN Communications Corp.	0.041	0.041	0.039	0.04	2,100,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.6	58,000
Philippine Tel. Corp.	0.89	0.9	0.88	0.88	4,150,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	0.99	0.99	0.97	0.97	270,470
Philweb Corp.	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	11,600,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	15	15	14.75	15	920,600
Manila Electric Co. B	24.5	24.5	24.25	24.25	1,141,900
Petron Corp.	2.28	2.28	2.26	2.26	2,875,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.98	0.98	0.96	1	3,610,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.36	1.36	1.34	1.34	176,000
INTL Container Term'l Sv	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	1,370,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	300,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.32	0.32	0.32	0.32	140,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.54	1.54	1.54	1.54	120,000
Union Cement Corp.	1.08	1.08	1.08	1.08	2,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	61,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	18.25	18.5	18.25	18.25	284,500
RFM Corp.	0.66	0.66	0.66	0.66	97,900
San Miguel Corp. A	54.5	54.5	54	54	146,800
San Miguel Corp. B	64	64	63.5	64	1,000
Universal Robina Corp.	5.4	5.4	5.4	5.4	300,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	300,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.33	0.33	0.32	0.32	60,000
Ayala Corp.	3.45	3.45	3.45	3.45	1,891,000
Abnott Equity Ventures	3.05	3.05	3.05	3.05	130,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	2,000,000
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	200,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.48	0.48	0.47	0.48	660,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.115	0.115	0.115	0.115	550,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.17	0.17	0.16	0.16	340,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.046	0.046	0.046	0.046	300,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	0.245	0.245	0.245	0.245	70,000
Ever-Gotasco Resources	0.018	0.018	0.018	0.018	100,000
Philinvest Dev. Corp.	1.06	1.2	1.06	1.2	640,000
PJ & Prince Holdings Corp.	1.06	1.06	1.06	1.06	10,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	1.19	1.19	1.175	1.175	381,400
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	200,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	2	2	2	2	4,399,000
Medco Holdings	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	10,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.04	1.04	1.04	1.04	2,400,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.28	0.28	20,600,000
Prime Corp.	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	700,000
Prime Orient Phils. Inc.	0.15	0.15	0.14	0.14	740,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	10,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	0.97	0.97	0.97	0.97	200,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Can Azucar de Tarlac	3.45	3.45	3.45	3.45	2,000
Manila Alliance Hldgs B	0.66	0.66	0.66	0.66	20,000
Matsumita Elec Phil Corp.	7.1	7.1	7	7	61,000
Matsushita Vinyl Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.08	1.16	221,000
Prime Gaming Phils. Inc.	0.32	0.32	0.32	0.32	44
Prvce Corp.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	423,500
SP Technologies Inc.	13	13	13	13	200,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Bella Corp.	0.56	0.56	0.55	0.55	2,440,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.24	0.26	0.24	0.26	470,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	0.31	0.31	0.31	0.31	50,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	50,000
Philippine Racing Club	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	7,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp (Pdr)	25	25.5	24.75	25	322,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series T	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series U	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	300
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	7.5	10.25	7.5	10.25	705,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	6	6.2	6	6.1	13,494,000
Aranata Properties Inc.	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23	200,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	30,000
C&P Homes Inc.	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.16	100,000
Cebu Prop. Vent. A	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	20,000
Cebu Prop. Vent. B	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	20,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.215	0.22	0.215	0.22	150,000
Fillinvest Land Inc.	2.18	2.18	2.18	2.18	446,000
Highlands Prime, Inc.	1.04	1.04	1.02	1.02	350,000
Koehn Phil. Properties	0.155	0.17	0.155	0.17	400,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	2.1	2.6	2.1	2.6	1,345,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	1.08	1.1	1.08	1.1	1,000,000
SM Development Corp.	6.6	6.6	6.5	6.5	1,478,000
Sm Prime Holdings Inc.	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	2,000,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	1.5	1.8	1.5	1.8	36,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23	2,630,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co. A	0.29	0.29	0.28	0.28	3,480,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co. B	0.008	0.008	0.0075	0.0075	57,000,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	10,000,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.4	0.42	0.4	0.41	1,400,000
Philix Mining Corp. A	0.42	0.42	0.42	0.42	220,000
Philix Mining Corp. B	0.42	0.42	0.42	0.42	220,000
OIL					
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.003	0.003	0.0028	0.0028	527,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0032	0.0032	0.003	0.003	165,000,000
Pacific	0.009	0.009	0.009	0.009	2,000,000
Sinopharm Corp.	0.019	0.019	0.017	0.017	210,000

The agri vote and the incoming president

By Ernesto M. Ordoñez

IT was the Christmas party of one of the organizations affiliated with the Alyansa Agrikultura, a coalition of the federations of farmers and fishermen with more than one million members. The discussion had turned to the favorite topic of the day: the presidential elections.

Paradigm shift

During this discussion, a farmer leader said, "Instead of waiting passively for the presidential candidates to tell us what they will offer, why don't we reverse the process and tell them what we expect from them? They would then be challenged to measure up to our expectations. The one who measures up best will get our votes."

"I agree," echoed a leader from the fisherfolk sector. "Let us conduct nationwide consultations with our members and formulate an agriculture electoral agenda which we can present to each presidential candidate."

As the enthusiasm grew for this paradigm shift of farmers taking an assertive rather than a passive role for such an agenda, a third leader said, "Let us have a national caucus by Jan. 30 so that we can present our agenda to the presidential candidates in February. But tonight, let us already start discussing some important preliminary positions."

What follows are three of these positions. They are well worth considering in any significant reform program that will give justice to small farmers and fisherfolk.

Coconut levy

On Dec. 14, 2001, the Supreme Court decided that the coco levy funds amounting to approximately P120 billion were public funds.

Therefore, all these funds should benefit the coconut farmers. The farmer leaders proposed that "farmers" in this context be interpreted to include not only the 1.6 million coconut farmers, but also the 1.9 million coconut farm workers.

The Supreme Court initially gave the Sandiganbayan six months to determine the legitimate owners of these funds, then extended this to another six months. But it was only last July, or six months after the second deadline, that the coco levy funds used for the United Coconut Planters Bank were declared by the Sandiganbayan as owned by the coconut farmers.

However, these funds amount to only P20 billion, with the major portion of the total amount still unresolved by the Sandiganbayan. Some coconut farmer-leaders suggested that the impeachment move against Supreme Court Chief Justice Hilario Davide was an attempt by powerful quarters to inhibit the further declaration of more coconut levy funds as belonging to the farmers.

The incoming president must make a strong commitment to push for the acceleration of this determination process in accordance with the Supreme Court decision. Any further delay may deprive the 3.5 million coconut farmers of the coconut levy funds due them since 1982, when the levy collections were stopped. The wait has already been too long.

Small fisherfolk

On June 11, 2001, Department Administrative Order 17 (DAO 17) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) was signed. It provided guidelines for the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority (NAMRIA) to delineate

municipal waters. In these waters, usually within 15 kilometers of the shoreline, only small fishers are allowed to fish.</

Dow 10,000 expected ceiling for years

NEW YORK—Although the Dow has closed above 10,000 11 times so far this month, it's likely to be years before the oldest and most widely watched US market measure stays over the mark without falling back.

In fact, the average could rise and fall from the 10,000 level a number of times before it enters a sustained upward rally, based on trading patterns seen when the 108-year-old Dow Jones industrial average first crossed the 100 mark and later surpassed 1,000.

"If there is a possible correlation, we can expect essentially a trading-range bound progression that could indeed last up to 20 years, or towards the years 2015-20," said Alan Shaw, a technical analyst at Smith Barney, in a recent study.

Checking Dow history, Shaw found the average first closed

above what investors then must have viewed as the 'psychologically significant' 100 level in 1906.

But though it flirted with that dizzying height several times in subsequent years, it "proved a market ceiling until 1924," Shaw told clients.

During those 18 years before the average broke through 100 with conviction, Smith Barney counted five cyclical bear markets, a decline of 20 percent or more, and four cyclical bull markets, until the fourth matured into the bull trend of the 1920s.

The pattern was repeated decades later when the 1,000 level became another tough sell to investors.

The average came within points of that milestone in February 1966 and again in December 1968, but only broke through that milestone in January 1973, according to Shaw. **Reuters**

2004 may be banner year for US

WASHINGTON—For the US economy, 2004 could turn out to be a banner year.

Forecasters believe things are falling into place to produce the strongest economic growth in two decades. Consumer spending will be bolstered by tax refund checks early in the year. Businesses are finally beginning to invest in new plants and equipment and rehiring some laid off workers, though improvements in the unemployment rate are expected to be modest.

"The economy is off and running, and 2004 should be a very good year," said Mark Zandi, chief economist at Economy.com.

That should be welcome news for President Bush and other incumbents who face voters next year.

Many analysts believe the overall economy, as measured by Gross Domestic Product, will expand next year by 4.6 percent or more, the biggest gain since 1984, when another Republican president, Ronald Reagan, was running for office.

But analysts believe there will be much less improvement in unemployment as businesses concentrate on boosting productivity so they can expand output without hiring new workers.

For that reason, the current jobless rate of 5.9 percent—down from a high this summer

of 6.4 percent—is expected to still be around 5.7 percent when America votes next November.

In addition to the boost from last year's tax cut and low interest rates, analysts are looking for economic strength from increased federal spending, which has soared in such areas as the war against terrorism.

The federal budget deficit is projected to hit a record \$500 billion in 2004.

"Never bet against a politician's willingness to spend in an election year," said Diane Swonk, chief economist at Bank One Corp. in Chicago, who predicted that the economy in 2004 will not be the curse to Bush that economy of 1992 proved to be for his father's reelection hopes.

A sustained upturn has been long in coming since the bursting of a stock market bubble in 2000 triggered the end of the longest economic expansion in US history.

The decade-long expansion ended in March 2001; the decline deepened with the terrorist attacks that fall.

Just as the economy began to regain its footing in 2002, consumer and business confidence was shaken by corporate accounting scandals and then by uncertainties of the Iraq war buildup.

However, a third round of tax cuts, com-

bined with the lowest interest rates in 45 years provided by the Federal Reserve, finally ignited stronger growth this past summer. This time, economists believe the recovery will not falter.

The sustained recovery should translate into job increases of 100,000 or more per month, which would translate into at least an additional 1.2 million more jobs next year, the first positive year for job growth since 2000. Since the recession began in March 2001, the country has lost 2.35 million payroll jobs.

And in a significant change from past downturns, workers who lost their jobs have stayed unemployed far longer.

The proportion of unemployed workers who have been without a job for more than six months hit 24 percent in November, a 20-year high, which Bush's Democratic opponents contend is evidence of the president's mishandling of the economy.

One architect of Bush's economic policy, former economic adviser Larry Lindsey, predicted growth over 4 percent and job gains of 150,000 to 200,000 a month.

David Wyss, chief economist at Standard & Poor's in New York, predicted GDP growth next year would hit 4.7 percent, in line with many private analyses. **AP**

US-Singapore free trade pact now in force

SINGAPORE—A free-trade agreement between Singapore and the United States, Washington's first with an Asian country, came into force on Thursday, the Singapore trade ministry said.

The agreement is expected to start a sweeping liberalization of trade in goods and services and enhance the protection of intellectual property rights.

Both nations have completed the legal and administrative requirements to implement the accord, signed in May between President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, the trade ministry said in a statement.

From Jan. 1, 78.7 percent of Singapore goods will immediately enjoy duty-free entry into the United States, rising to 92 percent within four years. All US goods entering Singapore will

be duty-free with immediate effect. Singapore will also further open up its economy to American companies.

Initial estimates show the island-state will save between 200 million and 300 million Singapore dollars (\$118 million and \$176 million) as a result.

"Together with enhanced investor protection, ease of entry and operation for investors and improved commitments in the services industries, the agreement will make it more attractive for US companies to invest in Singapore," the trade ministry said.

"Similarly, the agreement will make it easier for Singapore-based companies, including (small and medium enterprises), to invest in the US."

Raymond Lim, Singapore's minister of state for foreign affairs and trade and industry, has said the FTA

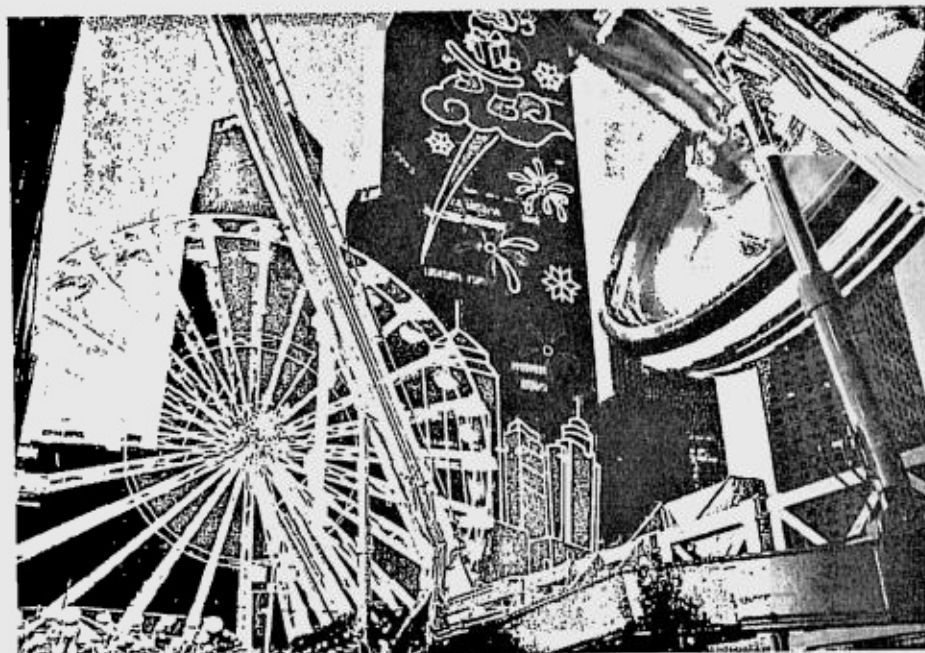
will boost Singapore's gross domestic product (GDP) by 0.5 percent.

He said the agreement is also likely to encourage hundreds of American companies to open regional offices in Singapore and use the city-state as a springboard for expansion into the Asian market.

There are already 1,300 American companies and 15,000 US nationals in Singapore, where private US investment is estimated at more than \$27 billion. Two-way trade is estimated at \$34 billion.

The US-Asean Business Council, a Washington-based group lobbying for investments into Southeast Asia, has described Singapore as "one of our best friends in Asia."

It said the agreement will help "anchor the US in Southeast Asia" and send a strong and positive message of US commitment in the region. **AFP**



A RIDE at a funfair against the Hong Kong skyline. Hong Kong is enjoying a boom in its economy with Christmas giving another boost to already improving economic figures. **AFP**

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

People, Events & Products

Awareness campaign, new drug for diabetes launched

ANNUALLY, a day is set to commemorate the World Diabetes Day (WDD) and this year, it was scheduled on Nov. 14. WDD is a major global awareness campaign for diabetes organized by the International Diabetes Federation (IDF) in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO).

2003's theme revolved around the effect of diabetes on the kidney. Majority of patients with diabetes are at high risk of developing severe kidney disease, which may end up in kidney failure, requiring long-term dialysis or kidney transplantation. Diabetes is the single most common cause of end-stage renal disease (ESRD), accounting for 35-40 percent of new cases each year.

An early sign of kidney damage is when the kidneys leak small amounts of a protein called albumin into the urine. This can be de-

tected by a simple urine test. With more damage, the kidneys leak more and more protein, a problem medically known as proteinuria. This has been established as an ominous prognosticator in diabetic patients.

It is estimated that diabetes affects more than 135 million people worldwide, and WHO expects the number to increase to 300 million by 2025. Diabetes continues to be a growing global health concern. New modalities in the treatment and care of diabetes are constantly being developed, such as early and aggressive treatment of type 2 diabetes.

In line with the 2003 celebration of WDD, GlaxoSmithKline, one of the leading research-based pharmaceutical companies in the Philippines, launched a new drug for the management of diabetes. The new

drug, which is a combination of metformin and rosiglitazone (Avandamet), targets insulin resistance and beta cell dysfunction, the underlying causes of type 2 diabetes.

The new drug is seen to provide durable glucose control for patients with type 2 diabetes. According to the landmark United Kingdom Prospective Diabetes Study (UKPDS), approximately half of patients on monotherapy with metformin or sulfonylurea will require multiple drugs to control the disease within three years.

However, patients with type 2 diabetes should continue to see their doctors for medical recommendation. Their physicians can give them advice on the best way to treat their diabetes as well as new treatment regimen that may be appropriate for them.



DTSI MOVES UP

Leading contact center systems integrator DTSI celebrates six successful years by moving to the 39th floor of prime business address PBCOM Tower in Ayala Avenue. DTSI president Miguel Garcia (left) assists People Support president Bong Borja and Karen Batungbacal, Source One

Communications Asia Inc CEO in cutting the ribbon. Borja and Batungbacal are also the chair and president, respectively, of the Contact Federation Philippines Inc (CFPP). DTSI is the leading provider of end-to-end solutions for enterprises in the Philippines today.



TGIFRIDAY'S BAR CHAMPS

TGI Friday's, in cooperation with Nestea, recently staged its much-awaited 2003 Ultimate Quest Bartending Championship at Friday's Hotel Rembrandt in Quezon City. Troy 'The Spawn' Ilarde (3rd from left) emerged the overall winner of the tilt. He is shown with Nestea's key account specialist Liza Mae Timonera, AYP Bunny Caminada, Johann Tam-Pho of Trade Marketing, and Bistro group director for marketing Lisa Ronquillo. Declared 1st runner-up was Larry 'Flair Devil' Guevara, who also won the best Nestea drink concoction award. Ilarde went home with P10,000 in cash, a trip for two to Boracay with accommodations, and a Nestea gift pack. He will represent the country in TGI Friday's Asian Bartending Championship in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, wherein the winner will battle it out in TGI Friday's World Bartending Championship in Dallas, Texas. Here, the top bartenders from the United States, United Kingdom, Europe, Asia and the Americas try to outpour, outflair, and outwit each other in a comprehensive skills test.

Midea and Exsol service centers appointed nationwide

EXPRESS Solution Marketing Corp., the Philippine exclusive distributor of Midea and Exsol home appliances, has appointed 64 new authorized service centers to back up their growing number of dealers across the country.

The 1st Express Solution Authorized Service Center's Convention was held at the Bayview Hotel along Roxas Boulevard in Manila, where the service providers were formally certified.

Express Solution is the fastest growing distributor of high-quality home appliance brands such as Midea and Exsol with products ranging from split and window-type air conditioners, refrigerators, washing machines, hot and cold water dispensers, rice cookers, VCD and DVD players, gas stoves and airpots.

Both Midea and Exsol are high-quality products sold at affordable prices. The new authorized service

centers were certified to backup the ever-growing number of authorized Express Solution distributors in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao, which now number in the thousands.

All authorized service centers stock an ample supply of spare parts in their inventory to guarantee that repairs are done at the soonest possible time. If and when a part is needed, the Express Solution central parts depot located in Quezon City can ship out any component to the service center through couriers in 24 hours.

Express Solution is the only appliance distributor in the country that offers an extended range of service to its clients. Major appliances such as air conditioners, refrigerators, washing machines and even water dispensers are covered with one-year warranty. Depending on the type, compressors are given a two to five-year warranty against defect.

During the first year, air conditioner buyers are provided with a free quarterly cleaning to ensure optimum performance.

In the Visayas region, Express Solution authorized service centers can be found in Cebu, Bacolod, Iloilo, Tagbilaran, Dumaguete, Catarman, Roxas and Tacloban City.

In Mindanao, the service providers can be found in Davao, Gen. Santos, Cagayan de Oro, Osamis City, Dipolog, Butuan, Pagadian, Surigao and Zamboanga City.

Authorized service centers in Luzon are located in Isabela, Cagayan, Dagupan, San Fernando and Angeles in Pampanga, San Pablo in Laguna, Lucena, Daet, Naga and Legazpi.

In Metro Manila, Express Solution Marketing Corp. is located at No. 4 unit 2, Sto. Domingo Center, Sto. Domingo Street, Quezon City. It can be reached at 742-1116 or 731-9920.

People, Events & Products

Laguna Suites offers flexible payment options

THE SEASON of gift-giving continues at The Residences at Greenbelt, Ayala Land's luxurious new condominium towers, which raise the bar for urban living to a higher level with a delectable choice of premier kitchen and bath showcases in the Laguna Suites.

In the spirit of the season, Ayala Land is pleased to offer even more flexible payment schemes for these prime three-bedroom units, which command sweeping views of San Lorenzo Village, Laguna and Canlubang, as well as the waters of Manila Bay.

These homes in the sky are regular in shape, which is an asset in space management, interior design, and feng shui principles. They are cleverly designed without corridors or hallways, ensuring that every square meter of space is highly valued. They feature the broadest balconies available at The Residences at Greenbelt—allowing for the greatest enjoyment of the Makati skyline and the lush lifestyle of the Greenbelt scene.

The interiors of the Laguna Suites offer three bedrooms, each with a private adjoining bath, and a wide living room that leads to the balcony. A kitchen wide enough to host a daily dining table adjoins a comfortable

room for the house help, complete with its own bathroom and storage space. The master bedroom has a large walk-in closet while the master bathroom features a built-in tub.

To fully realize the potential of these prime units, Ayala Land is giving buyers the gift of having either a sleek and contemporary kitchen showcase, or an exquisite designer master's toilet and bath.

The kitchen showcase fits the Laguna Suites' kitchens with professional-quality appliances: a built-in hob, range oven, and range hood from German appliance leader Miele, and a Fisher & Paykel refrigerator from the respected New Zealand brand.

The designer master's toilet and bath fulfills the desires of the modern lifestyle in which the bathroom becomes a place of beauty, relaxation, and pleasure, with fixtures and finishes from the finest European brands Duravit, Hansgrohe, and Hoesch—some of which feature the designs of the acclaimed Philippe Starck.

From the 7th to the 20th floors, Laguna Suites can now be financed with 20 percent down payment and 80 percent payment over 36 or 48 months or with 10 percent down payment and 90 percent payment over 60 months. The new 15 percent down

payment, 15 percent over 48 months, and 70 percent upon turnover is also available for the Laguna Suites. These new options complement existing terms of cash in 30 days, cash in 60 days, and bank financing.

Indeed, The Residences at Greenbelt epitomizes urban living. Beginning with the 48-story Laguna Tower, the three towers of The Residences at Greenbelt embody the summit of contemporary living, with luxuries and features befitting those at the top of their game.

The Residences is an organic part of the verdant and vital Greenbelt commercial center, recently awarded the Urban Land Institute Award for Excellence, the Oscar of the land use industry, for beauty of architecture and design, financial viability, community acceptance and relevance for the future, consistent with the institute's mission of responsible land development. The Residences at Greenbelt continues this vision as the only residential properties available to own within Ayala Center itself.

Model units are available for viewing at the 3rd floor of Greenbelt 3, Ayala Center. Interested buyers can call 848-5000 or e-mail ayala-sales@ayalaland.com.ph. They may also visit <http://www.ayalaland.com.ph>.



ABALOS LEADS POWER MAC CENTER INAUGURATION

Mandaluyong City Mayor Benhur Abalos leads the inauguration of Power Mac Center, the authorized Apple Center in the Philippines. Also shown are (from left) Jaime Caw, Millie Sison, Lawrence Sison, Myrabelle Tan, Dr. Nancy

Tan, and Purita Garcia. The Apple Center's inauguration was highlighted by the first-ever Apple event, an exciting fusion of product launch, fashion showcase, and acoustic extravaganza.



REP'S GLOBE THEATRE AT ONSTAGE GREENBELT

Ayala Cinemas and Repertory Philippines recently signed a contract to formalize their agreement. Onstage Greenbelt, known for being the favorite venue of local and international artists' concerns, premiere screenings for its big seating capacity and other events, will be the new home of Repertory Philippines, which will be called Rep's Globe Theatre at Onstage and will hold its first season play 'M Butterfly' this January. Present during the

contract signing were Winnie Nazareth, president, Ayala Theatre Management Inc (Atmi), Raffy Prats, Atmi VP, Bibot Amador, president and artistic director, Repertory Philippines Foundation Inc, Joy Virata, VP for audience development, Repertory Philippines Foundation Inc, Cathy Bengzon, division manager, ALI-CCG, Rolly Duenas, Atmi administrative manager, and Lelet Volfango, Atmi marketing manager.



ISUZU ALABANG MARKS 7TH YEAR

Isuzu Automotive Dealership Inc (Isuzu Alabang) celebrated its 7th anniversary Nov. 15 with simple rites starting off with a Thanksgiving Mass. The short program that followed thereafter included group presentations showing the extra-curricular talents of its associates. There were songs rendered and dance numbers performed. The highlight of the celebration was the unveiling of photo exhibit displaying the many past

and present personalities that contributed to the success of Isuzu Alabang. The affair was a tribute to the men and women behind Isuzu Alabang on its 7th year of success. Shown are the men and women behind Isuzu Alabang's success posing for a souvenir photo with Lito Reyes, IADI GM (4th from right), Luz Onanad, finance manager, and Jojo Katigbak, service manager (3rd and 4th from left respectively).

Free consultations this month

PRETTYLOOKS Hi Tech Beauty Center for Men and Women, one of the leading frontrunners in the field of cosmetic surgery, is holding free consultations and discounts on its products and services for the public this January.

In a statement, Prettylooks Company president Susan Co-Ong said that the consultations, free for the general public, is part of its information dissemination campaign this month to give a clearer view on the advantages and benefits of the services, which include non-surgical facelift, breast augmentation, butt lift, noselift, face and body whitening, liposuction and cosmetic surgery, among others.

She further said cosmetic surgeries, as well as their non-surgical procedures, are getting more common worldwide just like "beauty salon procedures", and should be given emphasis regarding its safe procedures and client-friendly costs.

The free consultations and discounts are available at its main center located at Unit 224-225 Building 2 Central Park 1, General Tinio corner Binay Streets, Bangkal Makati City (with telephone numbers 889-4830, 889-4831), and at its branch at Unit 1539 Mega Plaza Condominium, 1907 ADB Avenue corner Garnet Street, Ortigas Center, Pasig City (687-7507, 687-5098).

Product Files

E-bike tours the city

THE TRONIX Electronic bike or E-bike, the country's first locally manufactured electric bike, showed its best form in the grand celebration of the Annual Bike Festival in Marikina City recently. This stop was one of the many places that the Tronix E-bike visited that included the Festival Supermall, the House of Representatives, PTTC and SM City Manila.

The revolutionary E-bike is designed to create a different cycling experience for everyone. It is quiet and non-polluting. These can be attributed to its battery-powered electric motor that can reach speeds of up to 30 kph.

The Tronix E-bike is ideal for commuting, doing short distance errands, deliveries, and patrolling around subdivisions, villages, factories, warehouses, and barangays. Its utility, economy, and maintenance-free operation makes the E-bike a convenient mode of transport.

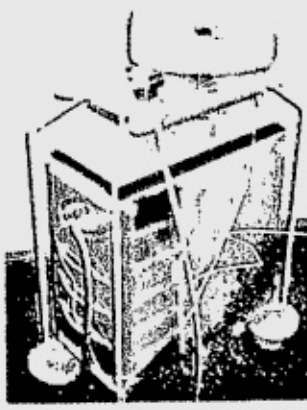
For inquiries, call 645-1592 or 0920-3965103, or e-mail info@innovatronix.com or tronixbike@innovatronix.com. Innovatronix, makers of the Tronix E-bike, is a Filipino-owned electronics company engaged in industrial automation and controls since 1987.



The natural face lift

LIFT 6 is an essential new treatment for a natural face-lift. It's a simple and effective workout that tones, strengthens and rejuvenates your facial skin to restore velvety radiant complexion. L6 provides an effective answer to facial problems particularly wrinkles, aging and sagging skin, painless and non-pitching stimulation for all kinds of skin.

Concentrating on the contour of the eyes, facial area, neck or neckline, and approved by the FDA of the United States for the treatment of cellulite and for body contouring, L6 is available at The Ritz Spa Malate located at 1614 M. Adriatico Street, Malate, Manila. Call 523-3333.



BBDO-GUERRERO ORTEGA SHINES AT ARAW AWARDS

BBDO Guerrero Ortega recently scored major award wins in the bi-annual Araw Advertising Awards held in the country's summer capital Baguio. A significant milestone was made when BBDO-GO won double platinum awards for Visa's action spectacular, "Dining Out", which starred international phenomenon Zhang Ziyi. BBDO-GO went the distance, earning the most finalists (52) in a field that spanned more than 2,000 entries from various ad agencies in the Philippines. BBDO-GO's work made it past a tough panel of local judges from the advertising industry and international creative bigwigs like Steve Elrick, Jureporn Thaidumrong, David Blackley, Norman Tan and Sonal Dabral. Among the winners were BBDO-GO's anti-pollution campaign for Bantay Usok, which netted 3 silvers and one bronze, FedEx's "Run Jenny Run" that took home one silver, and



Visa's "Dining Out", which scored 2 platinum, 2 golds, 2 silvers and a bronze. "Dining Out" has also been declared the 20th most awarded commercial in the world by the 2003 Gunn Report.

Lifetime achievement award conferred on Gallo

GALLO of Sonoma is honored to announce that Wine Enthusiast Magazine's 2003 Lifetime Achievement Award has been presented to Ernest Gallo, with posthumous recognition to his late brother, Julio. The award is being presented to honor both men for the lasting and significant contributions they made, and that Ernest continues to make, to the wine industry.

This is only the second time that Wine Enthusiast has presented a lifetime achievement award. Robert Mondavi was given the honor in 2002. Wine Enthusiast also recognized Gallo of Sonoma as American Winery of the Year in 2002.

"We applaud the Gallo family for their significant contribution to the wine industry over the past 70 years," said Adam Strum, editor and publisher of Wine Enthusiast Magazine.

"Most remarkable of all is their continuing ability to reinvent themselves and the company over three generations, constantly creating new wines and markets for them. Now graciously led by 3rd generation winemaker and winemaker Gina and Matt, Gallo of Sonoma is among the most awarded wineries to-

day."

"I couldn't be more proud of my grandfather and great uncle," said Gina Gallo. "They always had a great vision for the future. Because of the potential they saw in Sonoma County when they first purchased grapes from the region in 1933, and later when they acquired the Frei Ranch and Winery in 1977, my brother Matt and I are able to bring wines of great value and personality to the table today."

Gallo of Sonoma Winery has been among the world's most award-winning wineries since its first wines were released in 1993, under the leadership of third-generation family members, Gina and Matt Gallo, the sister and brother team of winemaker and winegrower. With premium vineyards and a world-class winery located in the heart of Sonoma County's Dry Creek Valley, Gallo of Sonoma is the proud recipient of Premio Gran Vinitaly 2002, and the only American winery in the world to ever be named International Winery of the Year three times (1998, 2001 and 2002). In 2003, Gallo of Sonoma celebrates the Gallo family's 70 years of winemaking.

OLPS '83 homecoming

BATCH 1983 of Our Lady of Peace School Antipolo City will have its grand reunion on Jan. 18 dubbed "Kita-Kits After 20 Years". There will be a motorcade, which will start at the Ynares Sports Center, followed by a Mass and program at 4 p.m. at the Deogracias Resort, Simeon Road, Grand Heights Subdivision, Antipolo City (before Tip-top). For details, e-mail Olpsians1983@yahoo.com, or text Ruby (0917-8164234), Lyndon (0917-8100621), Natty (0917-5263773), or Ronnie (0917-3870614).

ASLP marks 50th year

THE ASSOCIATION of Special Libraries of the Philippines (ASLP) will hold its golden anniversary celebration with the theme "ASLP at 50: On the Road to Global Excellence". The celebration will be held at the Goethe Institut (German Cultural Center) in Aurora Boulevard, Quezon City on Jan. 29 and 30 with Volker Avenmarg, director of Goethe Institut, as keynote speaker. Highlights of the celebration are the "Seminar on Developing Competencies for Librarians for Quality Service", the induction of the 2004 executive board led by incoming president Corazon G. Tolentino of the Senate Library, and the conferment of an achievement award to Bagong Bayani 2002 awardee Dick Orense, the only professional librarian at the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The Golden ASLP Award shall also be given during the Fellowship Dinner. Chairs of the various committees are past ASLP presidents headed by overall chair Susima Lazo Gonzales. For details, call Cecille at 734-7377, Cora at 552-6855 or Shirley at 521-1970.

Getaway Spa's 'triple treat'

GETAWAY Spa, one of Metro Manila's latest retreats for urbanites who need to "get away" from all the stress of daily living, marks the new year with a Triple Treat promo. For only P1,500, guests can avail themselves of three different treatments, namely Aromatic Salt Glow Scrub (to remove toxins from the skin), Swedish body massage (to relieve muscle tension, stimulate circulation and induce relaxation and tranquility), and Foot Spa with Paraffin (to improve circulation and relax tightened tissues recommended for arthritis or stiff joints). The Getaway Spa is located at 26 Sgt. Esquerro Street, Courtyard Building, Barangay South Triangle, Quezon City. For inquiries or reservations, call 928-9847, 928-9539, or 0920-5614375, or e-mail leah300@hotmail.com or getaway_spa@yahoo.com.

Rice self-sufficiency is national security

NATIONAL Food Authority Administrator Arthur C. Yap said that attaining the country's rice self-sufficiency is ensuring national security.

Yap made this reaction in response to the article of Dr. David Dawe, International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) economist, which said it would be better for the Philippines to import than to aspire to have self-sufficiency in rice.

He noted that the country's drive towards rice self-sufficiency is basically fueled by the fact that rice is the staple food of Filipinos. It is also a major component in the daily budget of Filipino families, comprising 12 percent of the consumer price index.

Thus, according to him, producing the commodity within the country is important, not just to secure the livelihood of 2 million rice farmers, but also to safeguard the entire nation's food security.

"While imported rice is cheaper, every sovereign country like the Philippines should protect its own sources of supply and not depend too much on other countries," Yap noted.

He also cited the Philippine experience in the early '70s and early '80s when the country's and world production dipped to very low levels wherein even as the country had money to buy rice, exporting countries would not sell because they were also protecting their own food security and buffer stocks.

Citing that rice is a unique com-

modity in the international market where only about 4 to 6 percent or about 20 to 25 million metric tons (MMT) are traded, Yap said any sudden surges in demand causes large increases in prices.

He also warned that the Philippines may end up paying higher prices for rice if it becomes too dependent on scarce supply from outside sources.

Along this line, he pointed out that the government is working towards attaining sufficiency in rice at levels that are also globally competitive, or where the nation's costs of production would approximate the world's production cost.

This, he said, is the focus of the program Ginintuang Masaganang Ani by the agriculture department encouraging the use of certified and hybrid seeds to increase the average yield of rice farmers. These programs of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, under the leadership of Agriculture Secretary Luis P. Lorenzo Jr are envisioned to give farmers better income from palay production as the increased productivity reduces the cost of production, Yap said.

The current main harvest, as announced by Lorenzo, already illustrates the wisdom of using certified and hybrid seeds. While area planted to rice had shrunk in the past three years, yield per hectare had increased from 3.10 MT in 2001 to 3.28 MT in 2002 and 3.36 MT this year with the use of certified seeds.

Yap said improving local rice yields has already made an impact on the country's rice imports. Rice imports in 2002 totaled 1.2 million MT. This volume was whittled down to 880,000 MT this year.

The country's march towards self-sufficiency is expected to result in a further reduced rice import volume in 2004, assuming there would be no major weather disturbances and other natural calamities that would adversely affect production, Yap explained.

An early release of the DA budget, especially for rice production improvement programs, he noted, would also further boost the first semester harvest next year. The department targets to attain 97 to 100 percent rice self-sufficiency by the end of 2004 to the first semester of 2005.

Yap also stressed that the fight for rice self-sufficiency is not just a fight for the 2 million Filipino rice farmers but the entire Filipino nation whose basic food must be secured and protected at all times.

An economist's view that the Philippines is better off importing cheaper rice than producing it at a higher price, he said, is a view that considers only constant parameters of demand, supply and prices.

The issue of food security must always be seen from the point of view of ensuring our national security, Yap pointed out.



'BOSING', GILBEY'S ISLAND PUNCH LAUNCH PROMO

Gilbey's Island Punch, the first and only pre-mixed premium gin drink in the country, recently launched the Presyong Pam-Bosing promo. Gilbey's Island Punch makes 'barkada' drinking more enjoyable because it gives the right hit with-out the alcohol burn, as it is made from the mixture of premium Gilbey's gin and an array of refreshing fruit flavors of pineapple, pomelo and

guyabano. Gilbey's Island Punch has been endorsed in a commercial by Vic Sotto. With him during the contract signing are (seated from left) Angelle Bautista, Gilbey's Island Punch product manager and Peter Khemlani, Gilbey's marketing manager. Standing, from left, are Fe Mir, Gilbey's product manager, Melanie Lim and Chuck Janolino, Diageo marketing director.



PAMILYANG OFW-SMES EXPO

Labor arbiter Teresita Castillon-Lora (4th from right) of the National Labor Relations Commission and Arturo Lumagor (3rd from left) of the Sangguniang Panlungsod ng Mandaluyong lead the ribbon-cutting ceremonies of the Filipino Seafarers Family Trade Fair 2003 and Pamilyang Overseas Filipino Workers-Small and Medium Entrepreneurs Job, Livelihood and Investment Expo 2003 at the Trade and Concert Halls of Star-

mall (formerly Manuela) in Mandaluyong City. Also shown are (from right) United Filipino Seafarers president engineer Nelson Ramirez, Star mall general manager Florita Tabuzo, Kanlungan Center Foundation executive director Mary Lou Alcid, OFW's Protect president lawyer J. Oswald Lorenzo, Pamilyang OFW-SME Network Foundation Inc president George Arriola, and Confederation of Solo Parents Philip Baldo and Tirso Paglicawan.



CALTEX LPG FUELS DON BOSCO PUGAS PANDESAL PROJECT

Caltex LPG has become among the latest benefactors of the Don Bosco Pugas Home for Street Children and Migrant Youths. Caltex donated LPG contents and tanks to power up the NGO's fledgling venture, the Pugas Pandesal bakery. The 'pandesal' project was formally launched recently as another partner-beneficiary of the Caltex Fund, the oil company's flagship community engagement program. With start-up capital

and fuel provided by this partnership, the Pugas Center envisions the bakery to be a self-sustaining project in the long-term that will also empower migrant youths with skills in bakery operations and entrepreneurship. Shown is Pugas Center director Fr. Bong Javines SDB (3rd from left) and Caltex LPG national manager Strong Macabulos (4th from left) with the Pugas baker boys.

Kitaro now serving Baguio, Cainta

KITARU, the Real Value, Real Taste, Japanese Restaurant recently opened outlets in Robinson's Cainta and in SM Baguio.

Now, residents and guests of the country's summer capital and Rizal's progressive town can enjoy authentic Japanese cuisine such as maki, sushi, sashimi, tempura and other favorites at affordable prices.

Kitaru, the multi-awarded Japanese food chain, offers complete meals that are big on meat not just on rice to give diners real value and taste.

The restaurant is likewise known for its party trays and bento boxes.

Other outlets are located in Shopville, Greenhills; Shaw Boulevard, Mandaluyong; RCBC Plaza, Ayala, Katipunan Avenue, White Plains, SM City, Manila; Vito Cruz corner Metropolitan Ave, Robinson's Ermita, Araneta Avenue, Robinson's Fairview, The Podium, Edsa Shangri-La Plaza, Robinson's Pampanga, SM Bicutan, SM Pampanga, Emerald Avenue, Ortigas and Riverbanks, Marikina.

For deliveries, call 912-1612.

'LOTR' treats from Globe

GLOBE lets its subscribers in on this year's much awaited screen flick, the concluding chapter of the "Lord of the Rings" epic trilogy "The Return of the King," with a rich assortment of cool free treats and hot movie properties in store for its subscribers. Until Jan. 15, new Globe Prepaid subscribers can have a limited edition 3-Cup My Precious Nestle NonStop Black Desire pack from Globe. Just go to any Globe business center, HUB or any authorized dealer and buy either a Globe Prepaid X-treme SIM for P200 or a Globe Hi-memory SIM for P150. Make a first reload during the promo period and receive a text message with promo information from 2977. Show this text message and surrender your SIM casing at any participating outlet of Odyssey Records, Caltex, StarMart, Shell Select, Petron Treats or any roving Nestle Ice Cream cart nationwide. Redemption period is until March 15.

Bombo charts 2004 plan

BOMBO Radyo Philippines, which consistently leads in all radio stations nationwide, has not lost the zeal for airwave supremacy as it holds its annual Top Level Management Conference 2004 (TLMC '04) at the Bayview Park Hotel, Manila. Bombo Radyo's TLMC '04 will be held from Jan. 4 to 8, as announced by Herman Z. Basbano, assistant vice president/COO of the AM division. Piloted by media mogul Rogelio M. Florete, the Network's president and CEO, the confab will be participated in by top officers of the Network, area managers and station executives of its 43-strong stations nationwide comprised of 22 Bombo Radyo stations for the AM division and 21 Star FM stations. The conference works around the theme "SOAR (Strategic Outlook of Advanced Radio)."

GTBC grants 3 wishes

GLOBE Telecom Business Center is giving its customers a chance to make their own wish lists come true from a special telco and lifestyle showcase. Among the phone packages up for grabs are a Nokia 6600 with wireless clip, a Nokia 7250i and music stand set, and a Nokia 3100 bundled with a Nokia fun camera and Nokia digital pen. Other items in the lifestyle product selection are two sets of prepaid golden numbers, a Manila Peninsula indulgence package and a P25,000 shopping spree at Rustan's, and a date with Globe FanZone celebrity Pia Guanio. Until Jan. 4, those who subscribe to a new Nokia G-Plan or purchase a Nokia prepaid phone kit at any GTBC will get a raffle coupon. Out of all the entries, there will be three winners. For more information, visit the nearest GTBC. Raffle date is on Jan. 14.



CBC BACOLOD INKS CBA WITH EMPLOYEES' UNION

Cosmos Bottling Corp (CBC)-Bacolod Plant, a subsidiary of Coca-Cola Bottlers Philippines Inc (CCBPI), management representatives and the Cosmos Bacolod Employees Independent Union (CBEIU) recently signed their collective bargaining agreement at the Heritage Pension and

Restaurant in Bacolod City. Shown during the signing are representatives of CCBPI and the CBEIU, led by CCBPI human resources director lawyer Jesse Macias (standing right) as he shakes hands with CBEIU president Lazaro Agustin.

A better future awaits in Canada

CANADIAN Opportunities Unlimited Inc (COUI), a consultancy firm that assists and guides Filipinos to apply and secure a permanent residence or immigrant visa to Canada, announces that the number of inquiries is rising from young and old alike. Its Makati office as well as its two satellite offices situated in SM Megamall and SM Pampanga are getting an enormous amount of walk-ins and phone inquiries, according to Yadi N. Sichani, COUI managing director.

COUI has three offices for efficient and effective services for its growing clients situated at the 5th floor, Security Land Building, 6797 Ayala Avenue, Makati, 5th Floor SM Megamall, Ortigas and its provincial satellite office at SM Pampanga.

Sichani says, "Our applicants tell us that migrating to Canada is their way of realizing their dream of a better future for their family. These applicants are looking forward to availing themselves of the various benefits given to citizens and immigrants alike. These are free education until high school, student loans to those wanting to study in a college or university, child tax fee benefit, free health care ser-

vices, unemployment insurance, and old age security. More so, earning capacity is 10 times better than what many Filipinos here at home are expecting."

He added, "We like to help them as much as we can, which is why we're offering the lowest consultancy fees in the industry. We are honest in assessing their chances of successfully receiving an immigrant visa in the same way that we tell them the risk involved should they fail to meet the requirements set out by the Canadian Immigration."

"We also offer job search assistance under our comprehensive service plan. Our clients who are now in Canada have not regretted their decision. But deep in their hearts they will still be missing the Filipino Christmas traditions like the Misa de Gallo along with puto bumbong and bibingka."

Information on how to qualify, documents and requirements to submit, fees to pay, services the company offers and survival tips are freely discussed with the marketing team at 813-5988, 810-5322, 687-3842, 687-4281, (045)9613376, or (045)9613387.

Product FILES

Your kid's best friend

WANT to know what true friendship is? Just observe two children. Their loyalty to each other knows no end. Their closeness founded on trust and commitment. Their love beyond barriers and prejudices. Just like Eric and Toby. Not only are they neighbors, they go to the same school as well. And they share many happy and fun moments together.

Now they have found another new friend in Clubhouse PALS, the latest plain round crackers made by Universal

Robina Corp that comes in a cute pouch for only P1. It's a fun, delightful snack companion that can be enjoyed anytime and anywhere-like a true friend who'll stick by you wherever you go. Clubhouse PALS is so tasty and crunchy children can't resist.

CH PALS are so handy that it can be placed in kids' lunchboxes, schoolbags and even pockets. And they can be taken plain or with various toppings such as jam, jelly, peanut butter or cheese spreads.

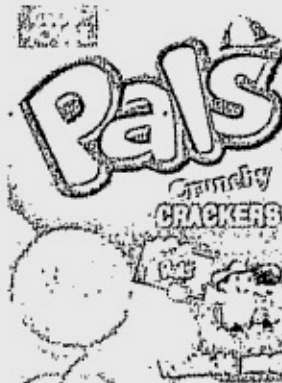
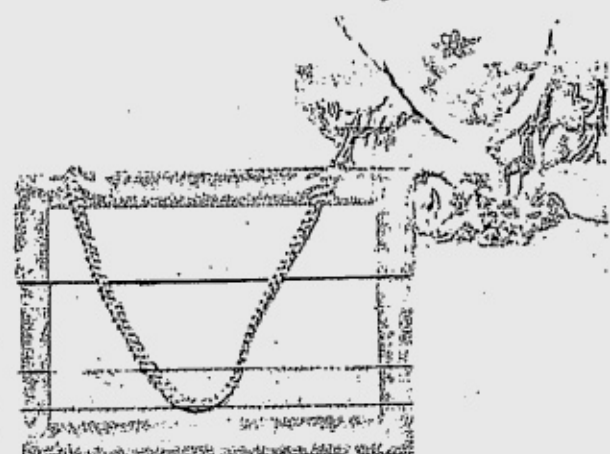


Photo treasury boxes



THE PERFECT gift not only for Christmas but for all other special occasions, these beautiful gift boxes contains two photo albums and one reusable box. These gift boxes are also available with your favorite licensed characters.

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"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the day of my life; and I will dwell in the
house of the Lord forever." Psalm 23:6

TOMAS MANGUERA SILANG

Joined his Creator on
December 27, 2003
at the age of 75.

He survived by his wife Eufemia
Vesagas; children Susette, Eileen,
Tomas Jr., and granddaughter,
Kristina. His remains lie in state at
Basilica Immaculate Concepcion,
Batangas City.

Interment will be on Sunday,
January 4, 2004 at 1:00 p.m. at Eternal
Gardens, Batangas City.

"For God so loved
the world,
that He gave us
His only
begotten
Son, that whoever
believes in Him
shall not perish
but have
everlasting life."
John 3:16

"I am the way,
the truth and the
life. No one
comes to the Father
except through Me."
John 14:6

"Even when I walk through a dark valley, I feel
no harm. For you are at my side, your rod and
staff give me courage..." Psalm 23:4

Dr. Manuel
"Oclog" Añover

Peacefully joined his Creator on Tuesday
30th December 2003 at the age of 80.

His bereaved wife Fe; children, Myrna,
Ramon, Julie, Paulette, Cathy, Marife; son-
in-law Wolff, Bernard, Joseph, Kookie;
daughter-in-law Babeth; grandchildren,
brother and sisters, relatives and friends
request the pious readers to pray for the
eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at home at 173
Avenida Veteranos, Tacloban City.
Interment will take place at the Leyte
Memorial Park on January 03, 2004 after the
celebration of the Holy Eucharist at
8:30 a.m. at Redemptorist Church.

"In Christ all shall be
made alive..." Corinthians 15:22

EMMANUEL RAPHAEL
MANALO JUANILLO

Now peacefully rests in the infinite Grace
and Goodness of the Lord on the
30th day of December 2003 at the age of 13.

His parents Demetrio & Maria Angela; sister Amanda; his
grandparents Eliezer & Shirley Juanillo and Dr. Jose Manalo Sr.
(t) & Flaviana Molina Manalo; his uncles and aunts Ely Rey &
Melba, She & Frank, Milot & Inday, Nonoy & Lorena, Jogi,
Manjette & Ted, Mimi, Pepot, JC & Purita, Tareen & Hans,
cousins, other relatives and friends request pious readers to pray
for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the La Funeraria Paz,
Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Saturday, January 3, 2004 at
Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina after the
2:00 p.m. Holy Mass.

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CLASSIFIEDS

Kids variety show
at Honda cars Alabang

THE third leg of Honda Cars Makati, Inc.'s (HCM) Power of Dreams Festival 3 was recently held in Honda Cars Alabang. The event showcased a children's variety show which included numerous games, a lot of fun and surprises. Photo shows the dynamic duo, hosts Marian Cabahug and Apollo Abraham with the energetic-filled children, doing the theme Let's Go.

Dubbed as "HCM Galactical Week-ends," the festivity highlighted a mélange of song, dance, story-telling and the participation of children ages 3 and above in the various games like the ASIMO Puzzle Blocks (named after Honda's humanoid robot), Bring Me, and Trivia Game on stellar and cosmic subjects. Parents/guardians went home with attractive surprises, too, in the group-singing contest called La-Jeng-Po.

Line-up of activities included those that revolve around galaxies, solar systems, as well as the arts. These were the Great Explorations by AMA Basic Education. The Art is Fun art contest let out the creative juices among tots age 3-9 years old. Kids Caricature and Picture Magic featured souvenir poses of participants in space outfits and background. Adults also enjoyed the Digital Driving Contest and computer games.

VIVA ENTERTAINMENT /
PINOY BOX OFFICE JOINS
CABLE CONVENTION

Viva Entertainment Inc. / Pinoy Box Office affirms its full support to Cable Convention 2004. Shown during the contract signing are (from left) Vicente Del Rosario Jr., chairman, Viva Entertainment, Inc. / Pinoy Box Office; Tony Selva, over-all chair and director, PCTA; Ken Fortun, general manager, Pinoy Box Office, and Allan Dungao, director, PCTA. Cable Convention 2004 is set on March 31-April 2, 2004 at EDSA Shangri-la Hotel, Mandaluyong City, Philippines.



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BUSINESS Friday

Business Features Editor Margie Quimpo-Espino

Eight ways to market functional foods or nutraceuticals

By Karen V. de Asis
Contributor

MEGATRENDS in the macro-environment like rising cost of healthcare; a fast and aging baby boomer population; lifestyle changes; and growing acceptance of alternative medicinal and health products have spawned a new type of food and beverage industry known as functional foods, or nutraceuticals.

The first generation of functional foods started in Japan. One of the most successfully marketed first generation functional beverages is Yakult, first sold in Japan in 1921 by its maker Dr. Minoru Shirota who became enamored by his University of Kyoto professor, Russian biologist Elie Metchnikoff's discovery. Metchnikoff, in his study of a group of Bulgarians, posited that Bulgarians lived longer and had better health because they consumed food that had generous quantities of friendly lactic acid bacteria.

Following this insight, Shirota developed a fermented milk drink now popularly called Yakult, as a s flavophilic probiotic carrying a bacteria strain called Lactobacillus Shirota, that is able to survive acids and bile in the gall bladder allowing it to reach the stomach intestines to kill deposits of harmful bacteria and foster the growth of good bacteria promoting good digestion and overall health.

Global awareness

However, it was in the '90s that serious work in functional foods and nutraceuticals took frenzied interest among major mainstream food and pharmaceutical global companies like Kellogg, Campbell Soup Co., Nestle, Kraft, Procter and Gamble, Novartis, Pepsico, Monsanto, Glaxo Smith Kline, etc. with the glaring opportunity presented by the new megatrends.

Dr. Stephen De Felice in 1989 coined the word nutraceuticals. Also known as functional foods. He defined it as a food, dietary supplement or medical food that has a medical and health benefit including the prevention and/or treatment of disease beyond basic nutritional functions.

In 1996, Health Canada proposed a refinement in the definition. While nutraceuticals and functional foods share the same physiological benefits including protection from or reduction of risks associated with chronic diseases, nutraceuticals come in medicinal forms and supple-

ments separate from mainstream food. Local examples are ABS bitter herbs Charagen (bitter melon) capsules that help reduce the risks of diabetes and C-Lium Fibre Supplement that helps eliminate constipation. On the other hand, a functional food has similar appearance to conventional food or may come in the form of mainstream food. It is consumed as part of a regular meal. Much like nutraceuticals, functional foods deliver beyond basic nutrition. Fortified foods belong to this category. Some examples are Del Monte Tomato Sauce with Lycopene, Tropicana Smoothies with FruitCal®, Yakult with Lactobacilli Shirota Strain, Kikkoman Soy Sauce with Gravitinol® grape seed extract and Nestle's PowerBar energy bar with simple and complex carbohydrates and 17 natural vitamins and minerals, among others.

Major industry setbacks

In a bid to capture a bulk share of a conservatively estimated \$55.6-billion share of the present global market with a minimum 8 percent annual growth through 2010 and a potential value of \$250 billion (Nutrition Business Journal Functional Foods Report 2002), major companies are devoting a significant portion of their muscle to this segment, and have post-haste marketed functional products motivated only by the single revenue objective. Not surprisingly, this has resulted in huge, costly and dismal failures.

An analysis of brand failures in the functional food and nutraceutical industry suggests some ineptness in marketing and a blatant disregard for the basic but highly important tenets of marketing. These include:

1. Upholding basic product expectations and integrity. A misguided perception that consumers will buy food products singularly driven by a preventive disease benefit never mind if it does not meet the basic expectations of a food product that include taste and full-flavor quality, smooth texture, aroma, compatible mouth-feel, no lingering after-taste, faithfulness to label claim, product stability and efficacy of scientific claim, among others. M&M/Mars failed in this aspect with VO2 Max, an energy bar packed with antioxidant aimed at serious athletes. While the product was clinically proven to speed up a user's recovery from strenuous activity, it failed on a basic expectation for a food product that is taste. This is a clear in-



dedication of Frederick Herzberg's two-factor theory in marketing that espouses that marketers must avoid dissatisfiers in their product delivery and ensure the presence of satisfiers to motivate a purchase. While the absence of a dissatisfier does not guarantee a sale, its very presence guarantees a loss. Among functional products and nutraceuticals, the benefit of health and wellness is an intrinsic satisfier that can turn into a sale only if the minimum expectation from a food product is delivered.

2. Clearly stating the consumer benefit. Mesmerized by the magnitude and power of scientific claims of health and wellness benefits, nutraceutical and functional food marketers revolve their story around the bioactive ingredient and not the benefit which consumers can derive from consuming the product. In doing so, marketers fail to articulate the product's benefit in a way that is meaningful and clearly understood by the consumer. This leaves the consumer recognizing the ingredient name but not exactly comprehending what its overall benefit is to the potential user. This was one of the reasons for the failure of Kellogg's Ensemble functional food line of nutritionally enhanced cereals, cookies, lasagna, frozen entrees, baked potato crisps made with cholesterol lowering psyllium husk that was axed eight months after its launch in 1999.

In contrast is Yakult's success story hinged on extensive consumer education achieved through massive introductory advertising and an innovative distribution channel of Yakult ladies

who painstakingly taught the market about how an ingredient like Lactobacillus Casei Shirota strain can promote overall digestion and good health. The big story and benefit remains to be good digestion and health, the ingredient is a mere reason to believe.

3. Use convenient, multiple channels to bring the product to your consumer. Campbell Soup Co.'s foray into the functional food industry was marred by a big flop with its line of Intelligent Cuisine, a home delivery meal program offering 40 clinically proven frozen meals and entrees designed to reduce risks of high blood pressure, cholesterol and diabetes. The meals were marketed via a mail order program priced at \$70 a week and arriving at one's doorstep by parcel specifically, United Parcel Service. Unfortunately, the delivery channel did not sit well with the product's potential consumers.

Much unlike mainstream food and pharmaceuticals, this new industry offers marketers an opportunity to capitalize on a combination of multiple channels drawing on mainstream grocery retailing and niche channels like health stores and pharmacies including detailing to medical professionals like medical doctors, dietitians and nutritionists.

4. Capitalize on value pricing. Overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude and power of health claims, marketers are virtually tempted to price their products at premium levels often beyond what the mass market is initially willing and ready to pay. Yakult's strength combines product, use of appropriate channels, con-

sumer education plus reasonable pricing, today at less than P40 per pack.

On the other hand, Johnson & Johnson's failure to successfully mass market Benecol, a cholesterol-reducing margarine made from a phytochemical plant stanol ester is its price at over \$5, five times the price of regular margarine. Nestle's Power Bar, an energy bar made from oat bran and complex carbohydrates releasing energy over a sustained period recognizes that its premium pricing may only be appreciated by a niche market of competitive and recreational athletes serious about their sports and who characteristically will not hesitate to pay a premium for the right nutrition.

5. Look for a meaningful story to tell. Because of the industry's infancy, there is a wide open field among marketers to explore the most promising consumer idea after defining which target market to tap. A huge marketing opportunity awaits functional food brands and nutraceuticals wishing to own any among a roster of health and wellness benefits that include healthy eyesight; stress relief and energy enhancement; prevention of fatigue, cancer, heart disease, joint pain or arthritis, diabetes, wrinkles; memory enhancement and mental acuity; age retardation; mood enhancement, among others.

6. Focus your story. The overwhelming number of health and wellness benefits that may be associated with one functional ingredient can only tempt the neophyte and less professional marketer to cite a roster of benefits while in the end confusing the target market. Likewise, it leaves the potential user with no clear, single-minded memory about what the product can really do or do best.

Yakult with a probiotic strain like Lactobacilli can prevent stress, infection, aging and indigestion. Clearly, the secret of Yakult's brand recall lies in its focused story on gut health, making it easy for consumers to understand and retain in memory how Lactobacilli Shirota strain can promote digestion hence, overall health.

Del Monte Tomato Sauce capitalizes on lycopene, an antioxidant found naturally in tomatoes that help lower the risk of heart disease. The success of ABS Bitter Herbs, Charagen ampalaya capsules and tea stems from clearly communicating the product's capability to manage dia-

betes. The scientific claim created mass market awareness by using credible endorsers known to be diabetics like entertainers Gary Valenciano and Nonoy Zuñiga as well as newscaster Mike Enriquez.

8. Truth in advertising. Advertising guru William Bernbach, best known for his Think Small. Volkswagen and When You're Number 2, You Try Harder, Avis Rent A Car advertising campaigns, once said, "Advertising doesn't create a product advantage. It can only convey it. A great ad campaign will make a bad product fail faster. It will get more people to know it's bad." While marketing communications can aid in creating awareness and trial for functional and nutraceutical products, success can only be sealed through delivery of scientific claims. Here lies the challenge for marketers to ensure the brand's consistency, safety, stability and efficacy of ingredients and overall product.

Future of nutraceuticals

What remains is the marketers ability to strongly communicate and advocate the benefits of functional products and nutraceuticals. Great opportunities exist as the aging baby boomer population is left with little choice but to take better care of their health. In the meantime, the next generation of baby boomlets are becoming conscious of the importance of healthy food intake thus influencing the kind of food that the young netgens or the Internet generation are taking. As new food preferences and habits begin to take shape, only forward-thinking companies with serious investments in R&D technology and marketing can become part of this young industry.

This means that marketers who aim to ride the bandwagon with inappropriate and unsubstantiated claims is likely to be exposed for their wheeler-dealing marketing strategies. Government legislators and regulatory bodies will likewise need to be more diligent and update their standards and measurement for identifying the integrity and efficacy of scientific claims made by functional food products and nutraceuticals.

(The author is a marketing consultant and 2003 Agora awardee for Marketing Excellence in Education. She teaches at the De La Salle Professional School's Graduate School of Business. Feedback at kdeasis@skyinet.net)

Getting acquainted with the power that beam (Taxation of electric cooperatives)

By Raissa P. Rodriguez-Bautista
SGV & Co.

THE REVOLUTION of the cooperative system in the Philippines has seen a multitude of improvements and modifications, which, by and large, recognize the roles of cooperatives as practical vehicles for promoting self-reliance and harnessing people power toward the attainment of economic development and social justice.

Across the broad spectrum of Philippine society, we have cooperatives that represent the collective interests of various groups—education, banking, credit, insurance, agricultural, industrial, health care, transportation, housing, labor, communication, consumers, marketing, electric, light and power, and even the all-inclusive multi-purpose genre, which can be a combination of two or more business activities.

Thus, the need to understand the various cooperative laws and the corresponding tax exemption privileges applicable.

Faithful to the mandate of the Constitution (The Congress shall create an agency to promote the viability and growth of cooperatives as instruments for social justice and economic development, Section 15, Article XII), Republic Act No. 6938, which ordains the Cooperative Code of the Philippines, and Republic Act No. 6939, which created the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA), were both enacted in July 1989.

Essentially, the Cooperative Code fortifies the objective of the State to encourage the private sector to undertake the actual formation and organization of cooperatives, and therefore create an atmosphere that is conducive to their growth and development. The CDA was thus created as the government agency in charge of the registration and regulation of cooperatives.

A major component of the Cooperative Code, as implemented by the CDA, is the set of tax incentives applicable to duly registered cooperatives.

For this purpose, the BIR has issued Revenue Regulations No. 21-01 on Nov. 12, 2001 (a full write-up on this was published on this column last May 3, 2002).

Electric cooperatives

However, prior to the enactment of the Cooperative Code, and the creation of the CDA, was Presidential Decree No. 269 (1973), otherwise known as the National Electrification Administration Decree. PD No. 269 originally governed the organization and registration of electric cooperatives, concomitant with the national policy of total electrification of the Philippines on an area coverage service basis. Pursuant to this national policy, PD No. 269 exempts electric cooperatives from (i) income taxes, (ii) and, subject to certain conditions, from the payment of all govern-

ment fees (both national and local), and (iii) all duties or imposts on foreign goods acquired for its operations, among others.

But with the enactment of the Cooperative Code of the Philippines, the organization and registration of all cooperatives, including electric cooperatives, were transferred to the CDA. Section 9 of RA No. 6939 provides that the power to register cooperatives shall be vested solely on the CDA. Thus, the functions of certain government departments and agencies, including the National Electrification Administration (NEA), were explicitly transferred to the CDA.

The Cooperative Code nevertheless provided for a three-year transition period within which existing electric cooperatives under PD No. 269 could register with the CDA. Under the Omnibus Rules and Regulations on the Registration of Electric Cooperatives approved by President Fidel V. Ramos on Feb. 10, 1994, these electric cooperatives were given up to May 4, 1997 within which to permanently register with the CDA.

The crucial issue therefore is, whether NEA-registered electric cooperatives which failed to qualify or opted not to register with the CDA still enjoy the aforesaid exemption privileges under PD No. 269.

DOJ opinions

The Department of Justice, in an opinion addressed to the NEA

administrator, confirmed that PD No. 269, which originally governed the organization and registration of electric cooperatives, is not amended or repealed by RA No. 6938. However, electric cooperatives which will qualify for registration as such under RA No. 6938 shall be covered by the said republic act. (Opinion No. 41, Series of 1996, April 23, 1996).

Unlike other existing cooperatives which shall be deemed registered with the CDA but whose registration shall be cancelled if they fail to submit their certificate of registration, copies of articles of cooperation and bylaws and their latest duly audited financial statements within one year from the effectivity of the law, electric cooperatives are not considered registered outright but must apply and qualify for permanent registration with the CDA within the three-year period. However, failure of such electric cooperatives to apply and/or qualify for permanent registration with the CDA will not mean cancellation or forfeiture of their registration with the NEA. They shall remain as NEA-registered electric cooperatives entitled to all the benefits and incentives granted under PD No. 269. However, they shall not be entitled to the other privileges granted to CDA-registered electric cooperatives under RA No. 6938 (Ibid.).

Based on these premises, the DOJ opined that registration with

the CDA under RA No. 6938 is optional insofar as electric cooperatives are concerned (Ibid.).

This opinion was reiterated by the DOJ in Opinion No. 101, Series of 1996 dated Nov. 15, 1996.

In Opinion No. 014, Series of 1999 dated Feb. 3, 1999, the DOJ was, however, confronted with the issue of whether such cooperatives continue to enjoy their exemption privileges under PD No. 269 vis-a-vis RA No. 6938 and the rules and regulations implementing the Local Government Code (LGC) of 1991 (Republic Act No. 7160). Section 193 of the LGC (as implemented by Article 183 of the implementing rules thereof) provides that all local tax exemption privileges or incentives granted to any person, including GOCCs, are considered withdrawn, except cooperatives duly registered under RA No. 6938, among others. The DOJ held that while a general law, such as RA No. 7160, cannot repeal a special law like PD No. 269, Section 193 of RA No. 7160, as implemented, which deals with the specific subject of withdrawal of tax exemptions, may be deemed a special provision in relation to Section 39 of PD No. 269 which grants tax exemptions to electric cooperatives. Thus, electric cooperatives that remain registered under PD No. 269 will no longer be exempt from local taxes. Section 193 of the LGC, as implemented, is a later provision which should prevail over the general tax exemption of Section

39 of PD No. 269.

BIR rulings

At least, in so far as the issues of value-added tax (VAT) and franchise tax exemptions are concerned, the BIR has issued a number of rulings, concerning electric cooperatives.

The Association of Philippine Electric Cooperatives (Apec) is a national organization of rural electric cooperatives registered with the NEA pursuant to PD No. 269. The members of Apec opted not to register with the CDA following DOJ Opinion No. 41 dated April 23, 1996. The BIR held that electric cooperatives are exempt from the franchise tax under Section 119 of the Tax Code. The 2-percent franchise tax is due and payable by electric utilities which are holders of legislative franchises. Electric cooperatives are not legislative franchises but are created by virtue of RA No. 6938 or PD No. 269. Likewise, pursuant to Section 109(s) of the Tax Code, sales by electric cooperatives duly registered with the CDA or NEA relative to the generation and distribution of electricity, as well as their importation of machinery and equipment, including spare parts, which shall be used directly in the generation and distribution of electricity shall be exempt from VAT (BIR Ruling DA-250-03 dated July 31, 2003, citing BIR Ruling No. 069-98 dated May 21, 1993). (To be continued)

LIFESTYLE

Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso

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'03 was the year of the updated terno

LAST year will be remembered as the year women, young and otherwise, seriously and obviously dressed up again. By "up," I mean long, floor-skimming gowns or ball gowns or ternos.

Last week at the blessing/Christmas dinner at Donnie Ramirez's new home in Sta. Rosa, Laguna—which is mega-solitude setting, by the way—the talk was this grand Tsinoy wedding where women were all in ball gowns, voluminous ones at that, like in a masquerade ball.

Indeed women in '03 went back to custom-made-wear designers (medium-priced, high-end), giving the local fashion business a shot in the arm. This demand added to the regular, lucrative demand for wedding gowns, which the retail industry can't yet crack. Auggie Cordero, who confirmed to me the relatively big demand for ball gowns this year, noted that a good number were "rush orders" from women who at the last minute would decide to wear such elaborate gowns upon realizing that everybody else would. (The wedding of Iya Guingona and JM Lagdameo, for example, was a must-dress-for occasion.)

After almost two decades of dressing down, this fashion reversal came naturally, although somewhat behind the drift in world fashion, which returned to glamour and drama long ago.

What perhaps gave Manila's women the push to return to long evening wear was that there were good high-profile occasions for it. To begin with, '03 became the year of Joe Salazar and the terno ball, and later, the exhibit inspired by him—both arising not from an early elaborate plan but from an almost spontaneous reaction to Joe's serious illness.

As many know, I was chatting with Joe about his life and bout with throat cancer when it dawned on me that although they're only in their late '50s or early 60s, Joe and his generation of designers yielded the golden era of Philippine fashion—the '70s to the '80s when haute couture and RTW designers proved their genius and craftsmanship in round-the-clock fashion, from resort wear, corporate suits to evening wear, before their counterparts in Hong Kong and Thailand did. Then, we realized that all this could go to oblivion if the achievements of the likes of Joe were not acknowledged and explained for the young and future generations to be proud of. It was then that the idea of a Joe Salazar retrospective was born.

I sat down with Metropolitan Museum of Manila executive director Ino Manalo and Bench's Ben Chan, Joe's bosom friend. Culture scholar Ino has always appreciated the role of fashion in Philippine culture. He never denigrated it and saw it, in fact, as dynamic art. I wanted to hold our Metro magazine's Joe Salazar Retrospective Exhibit at the Met but Ino thought it would be in keeping with the Met's mandate if the tribute were to the terno as a whole and the Philippine design genius behind this national wear—meaning from the pre-Ramon Valera era to Joe Salazar and later the Jojie Lloren generation.

One idea led to another. I stood my ground on the Joe Salazar Retrospective Exhibit, this time held at ABS-CBN's ELJ Center because I firmly believe that at this point, Joe deserved to have the limelight all to himself, his craft being that significant in his own fashion era. Valera had his time and although his artistry and genius are timeless—to inspire and be the source of pride of future generations—others had come after him, carving their own niche, and these would be the

likes of Joe, Auggie, Inno Sotto and their immediate mentors Christian Espiritu, Ben Farrales. (Pitoy Moreno is an institution in himself.)

Ino went ahead to conceive a daunting terno series—the ball in November, which included a fashion show of relatively young designers paying tribute to Joe, and opening in early December was the Terno Exhibit of more than a hundred ternos spanning generations of designers and communities, from Manila to Angono.

There has never been a terno exhibit as comprehensive as this. It's ongoing at the Met until February. You must see it and better still, if you have *balikbayan* kin visiting for the holidays, bring them there so they will see and remember what the Filipino is—a proud race whose artistic genius had reached a level of sophistication long before there was a CNN.

The exhibit, on the ground and upper floors of the Met, is ingeniously yet elegantly mounted. A young designer from the Cultural Center of the Philippines, Gino Gonzales, designed it. The entrance to the exhibit makes clear right away the range of material—from the hip and contemporary to the historical. For instance, among the pieces on the foyer is the micromini terno designed by Rhett Eala for Celine Lopez. A giant terno sleeve serves as backdrop for the ternos at the entrance. Another creative idea of Gino was to separate the minimalist black ternos designed by Salazar for the Marcos women (Imelda, Imee and Irene) for the burial of the late President in Ilocos. These stood against a backdrop of black-and-white paper panel that unfolded to the ground—a setting whose sheer elegance conveys to the visitor the message that the terno can connect to today's era of Zen minimalism.

What makes this exhibit comprehensive and unique is Ino's firm determination—which I didn't succeed in dissuading him from—to present the terno in various dimensions—from its social and historic context to its creation and craft. Initially, I thought this approach would be unwieldy at the least or heavy and scholarly contrived at the most. Ino must have thought the opportunity to gather ternos from celebrity owners and relatively unknown community designers was rare so he seized it.

He worked months to gather the mix and almost each significant designer was represented—from the ternos worn by our beauty queens (Margie Moran Florendo, for example, who was at the opening), to those designed by couturiers in the provinces for a variety of occasions, including provincial balls.

He was even able to fish out a hardly seen work by the talented yet reluctant designer Mark Higgins, son of the fashion pillar Salvacion Lim Higgins. Worn by

TERNO TRIO. Menchu Menchaca-Soriano, Maricris Zobel and Doody Menchaca-Tuason

IN THE DETAIL. Nina Herrera-Huang stands out in a sea of red with her mesh butterfly sleeves

Irene Marcos-Araneta, it's a beautiful red terno that stands out because of its cut and silhouette. Unlike the usual terno, it's hardly embellished. It is asymmetric, the front raised to bare the legs. From this raised hemline sprout layers and layers of black tulle—its stiff texture a foil to the soft red fabric. It looks young yet very elegant.

Another is a Joe Salazar fuchsia done for Imee Marcos. What makes it outstanding is its bodice is draped using Velcro. The way

Joe frayed the strips of draped fabric and attached them using Velcro is cutting-edge craftsmanship.

That opening night last Dec. 11 at the Met, seeing how some women wore the terno or Filipiniana-inspired evening wear assured me that the terno was not stuck in a time warp, that today's women can update it to suit today's style and lifestyle. Nobody has done this better than Irene Marcos-Araneta who, I believe, is one of the stylish women. (Politics aside, that is.)

That night Irene was in a purple Pepito Albert terno, its bodice cut tight and low to reveal just enough cleavage. What made her terno innovative was that it was cut way above the midcalf to reveal the stilettos and plaid ruffled hem reminiscent of *patadyong* pattern. The plaid was in bright shades that contrasted against purple. It was chic, contemporary and young. Trust Irene to be innovative and cutting-edge, without overdoing it. The look was almost nonchalant, which is what real style should be. If other women are smart enough, they could take the cue from Irene and wear the terno short to allow movement—perfect for after-six elegance. She could set this trend.

Another was Mia Borromeo who wore a white and brief Maria Clara-inspired top with tight denim jeans. That was native elevated to chic.

And then from the November terno ball, the photo that caught my eye was Lizette Cojuangco's all-white unglittered terno. Or

from the Red Cross ball this year, there was Nina Huang in an unembellished red terno the only design highlight of which were the meshed sleeves.

Indeed one good news in a bad-

news-ridden 2003 was how the young Filipinas revived their inherent sense of fashion and style to herald a return to glamour and feminine elegance. And they did it amid the pessimism of the times.

LIFE-Styled

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DANILO Franco for ARMM

FREDERICK Peralta for Caraga Region RICHARD Papa for Region II

Several designers take on the challenge to update native fabrics with new designs



EFREN Ocampo for Region 3

Indigenous but Contemporary

MIKE dela Rosa for Region 9



Text by Alex Y. Vergara
Photos by Chito Vecina

SO you thought indigenous fabrics are good only for making costumes?

Several of the country's leading fashion designers met the challenge of the Department of Tourism to incorporate locally sourced materials such as *yakan*, *hablon*, *piña*, *abel iloco*, *sina-mai* and Philippine silk, among others, into contemporary wear—from formal to corporate attire for men and women.

Billed as "Wow Kasuotang Pilipino," the recent open-air fashion show at the Plaza San Ignacio featured the works of such designers as Frederick Peralta, Barge Ramos, Ole Morabe, Mike dela Rosa, Nono Palmos, Danilo Franco, Efren Ocampo, Steve de Leon, Loreto Popioco, Larry Espinosa, Renee Salud and Bubum Melgar, among others.

Work on the fashion extravaganza began a few months ago when the DOT invited the designers and assigned each of them to a specific region to source for materials as well as inspiration for their pieces.

Sourcing

Sourcing wasn't a problem as the designers soon discovered for themselves. There were enough materials to work on since they were only asked to come up with three to five pieces each.

It would have been a different matter, however, had they been made to use the fabrics on a regular basis. Not a few of them admitted that such hand-woven materials, being difficult to produce, are quite difficult to source when used on a huge scale.

Aside from coming up with clothes that reflect their respective styles, the real challenge was to think of ways to make each piece wearable. And most of them delivered with clothes that were far from costume-y, but were in fact perfect either for the ballroom or the boardroom.

Mike dela Rosa, for instance, used *yakan* fabrics to come up with crisp-looking coats and dresses. Some were worn alone, while others were paired or combined with more contemporary fabrics such as silk blouses with ruffles and slim satin pants.

Dela Rosa learned to work around certain limitations. Since the fabrics were hand-woven and irregular, it was quite difficult for him to align both ends together. Still, such a flaw was hardly obvious on slim and statuesque models.

Danny dela Cuesta also zeroed in on the office woman with tailored separates fashioned from *abel iloco*. He drew inspiration, he said, from Christian Dior's so-called new look for the 1950s. The designer was at home with the fabric, having worked with it a number of times since the 1980s.

Barge Ramos also chose to reinterpret the *malong* from South Cotabato through classic silhouettes. A swing coat with a matching dress, for instance, harked back to the 1960s, all right, except for the fabric—bold horizontal stripes in varying shades of pink and violet obviously sourced from Mindanao.

In keeping with the colors of the region, even Ramos's two Barong Tagalogs made of *jusi* were dyed maroon and black. He accented them with silk-woven *malong* panels for that unmistakable southern flavor.

Had Ramos and his colleagues been given

more time, they could have conducted product research and done away with certain patterns to make the fabrics more mainstream. But doing so, he realized later, would have robbed each region of its distinct look and flavor.

Not all clothes were strictly casual. Some pieces were dressy enough for evening affairs. Loreto Popioco fused dyed *piña* and *jusi* with versatile Thai silk to come up with ball gowns with beaded and embroidered skirts sourced from Laguna and Batangas.

Local silk

Speaking of Thai silk, Filipino designers can take their cue from Larry Espinosa, who fashioned several body-hugging gowns made almost purely of Philippine silk sourced from Negros Occidental.

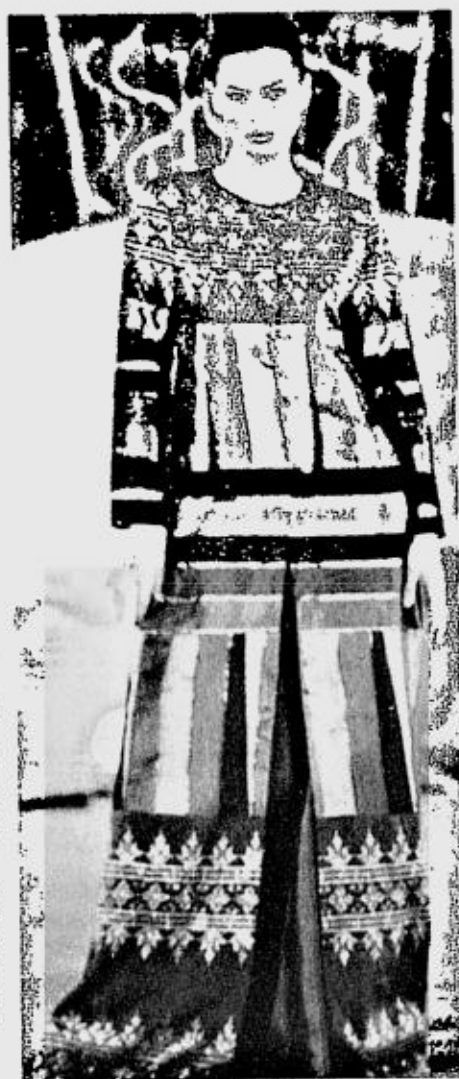
Espinosa, ever the craftsman, came up with such eye-catching elements as a shawl fashioned from silk cocoons, ostrich feather-like elements that are actually slivers of silk thread and knitted bodices also made of home-grown silk.

Nono Palmos, a native son of Miag-ao, Iloilo, drew inspiration from the Miag-ao church to come up with structured gowns and floor-length coats made of *hablon*. He then draped and combined the region's signature fabric with a sheer and beaded material.

Frederick Peralta drew inspiration for his off-white floor-length trapeze numbers made of duchess satin from the Caraga region's pineapple plantations and the Benedictines' monastic life in Bukidnon.

The pineapple, he said, became his inspiration for lace appliqué with geometric designs. Peralta then draped his gowns with yards of sheer black silk sourced from Mindanao. His choice of off-white not only contrasted with the black silk. It made for a fine tribute to the monks garbed in white who now call the region their home.

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BARGE Ramos for Region 12



LARRY Espinosa for Region 6



OLE Morabe for Region 2



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